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NEA Today

October 2002

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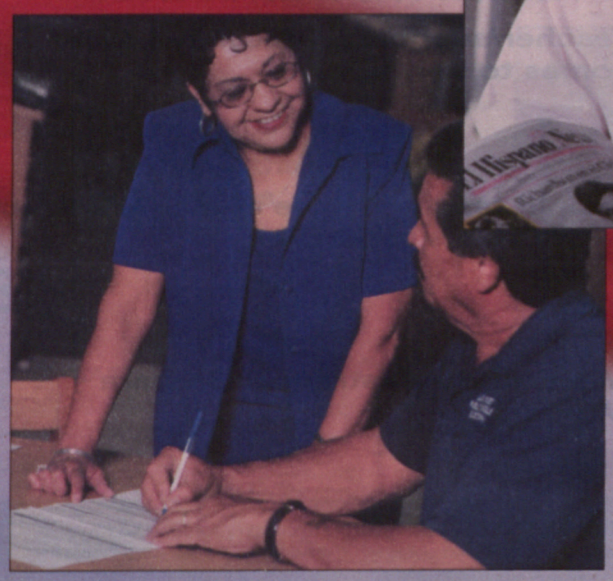
See page 28.

Politics Matters. Really.



Get Informed. Get Involved. Vote.

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NEA Today

October 2002

Volume 21 • Number 2

COVER STORY

Christ Chavez

Politics Matters. Really.

Politics affects your classroom, your students, your school site, and your pocketbook. That's why educators across the country—like New Mexico's Patrick Sanchez (above)—carve time out of their busy schedules to get candidates who are friends of public education voted into office. **See page 8.**

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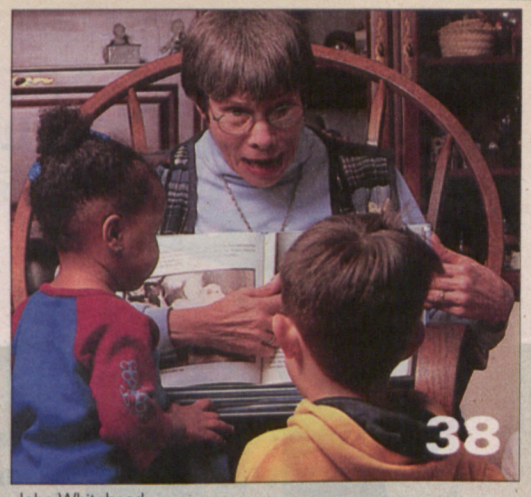

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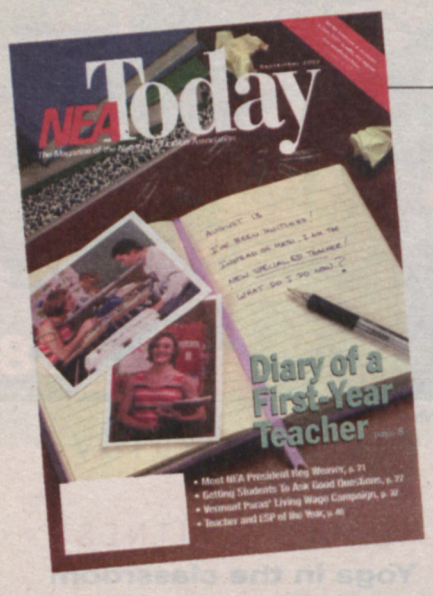

Letters

SURVIVING THE FIRST YEAR

I felt like I flashed back to 1980 when I read Missy Conner Stricklin's heartfelt diary of her first year of teaching (Cover story, September 2002).

When I was a student teacher, my mentor teacher made it very clear she thought I did not have the skills to become a good teacher. I could feel Missy's pain as I read about the way her principal and a consultant tried to blame her for a problem student. Shame on them and shame on my mentor teacher for not being supportive.

It is 22 years later and I am glad I ignored my mentor's advice to find another career. I still love teaching and try to always be a credit to our profession. Hang in there, Missy. I can tell you have what it takes to make a difference.

Barbara Brezel
South Windsor, Connecticut

I was extremely moved by the story about the first-year teacher who was switched from teaching math to special education. Missy Conner Stricklin has quite a bit of courage to work with students who originally would have been left behind. Instead of giving up, Ms. Stricklin decided to hang in there and deal with some of the challenges she faced as a special education teacher.

I was particularly fond of her ability to reach the autistic student whom she related to Rain Man. I am a special education teacher who works with autistic students. I also was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism, and was enrolled in special education for most of my elementary education and some of my time in middle school.

I chose to become a teacher to thank those people who had the courage and dignity to work with a child with a hidden disability such as mine. It took me about seven years to obtain my teaching credential, and I had to overcome many obstacles to land a teaching position. I chose to teach special education because I feel that many of these children are not going to function properly in society without the proper guidance.

I love my teaching position and didn't realize that I could work so well with students with autism. I understand what difficulties and challenges my students face daily, because I have a higher functioning form of their condition.

I wish that more teachers would spend part of their teacher training either visiting or working in a special education classroom. As teachers, we need to realize that all children are gifted, it just takes us longer to reach some students than others. Ms. Stricklin, keep up the good work.

Troy Sorrell
Downey, California

LOSING OUT ON SOCIAL SECURITY

Artville

I was delighted with the extensive coverage you gave to the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision ("Quite Simply, an Issue of Fairness," September 2002).

When I found out about these provisions nine years ago, I started researching and working to bring about their repeal. This grassroots effort has been tedious but essential. Our two senators and eight congress members signed on as co-sponsors to S.1523 and H.R. 2638, legislation to repeal the GPO and WEP.

The GPO and WEP clearly discriminate against public employees by reducing or erasing their rightful Social Security benefits while nonpublic employees with private pensions receive their entire pensions and their full Social Security benefits.

As we all know, this is an election year, and that gives us some leverage. Public employees who have spent their lives working in public service should not have to worry about a reasonably secure retirement. The 107th Congress should take action now to address and resolve the hardships produced by these two provisions.

Edris B. Kelley
Marshfield Hills, Massachusetts

My wife and I worked in several states in education and other jobs before we moved to California, from which we retired as teachers in 1996. Before our retirement, we faithfully checked with Social Security for estimates about the benefits we would receive. Social Security indicated that my wife's monthly check would be almost $500.

You can imagine our shock when we completed our Social Security retirement applications and learned that my wife would receive only a little more than $100 each month because she was caught by the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision.

As a young worker, she worked part time in a food market. As a teacher, her salary was very low. As a mother, she stayed home with each child and worked as a teacher when she could. It appears the GPO and WEP are gender-hostile and affect many women who made low salaries and then interrupted their work to raise children.

I hope Congress will repeal the GPO and WEP so that everyone affected by the provisions will receive what they should have received from Social Security. I personally am asking all teachers to write to their senators and representatives to urge Congress for a repeal.

Ronald Giberson
Lexington, Kentucky

I've been retired 16 years, and it is gratifying to see the NEA has noticed that teachers are being put down by Social Security. I still have a copy of my first Social Security check, which came to just one dollar because I was a teacher and my husband was a teacher.

I started working when I was 15-years-old to get through school, but the government considered the Social Security benefit amount others received a "windfall" for me! And my pension is quite small because I stayed home and raised my children.

By the way, we are taxed with regular taxes, just like everyone. One would think that NEA, with all of its power, could succeed in rectifying the dishonor the offset provision inflicts on the teaching force, especially to those of us who had to moonlight to support our families until teaching salaries got fairly decent. To the members of Congress I say, down with the extra taxation!

Mrs. Pete Vallosio
Peoria, Illinois

TRUE LEARNING

"Life in a Jar" (My Turn, September 2002) exemplifies what teaching is all about. Norman Conard challenged four students to live out the motto, "He who changes one person, changes the world entire."

By uncovering the story of heroine Irena Sendler, who saved 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto, these students became heroines themselves. By performing a play based on Ms. Sendler's life, the students reached thousands of other people. They even were able to visit Ms. Sendler in Warsaw. What a life-changing experience for the group!

Every one of us should copy this article and mail it to those in our state capitals who insist that learning can be measured by objective tests. Not so. This article shows true learning, and we must never forget it! My congratulations to Mr. Conard, his students, and, above all, to Ms. Sendler. I am humbled by your actions!

Janet Haisman
Oak Park, Illinois

HATE CRIME RESOLUTION

The only problem with making a resolution such as I-43 on hate-motivated violence ("Highlights from New and Revised NEA Resolutions," September 2002) is that it inadvertently trivializes violent crimes with different motives. When separate laws are enacted for hate crimes it seems that we are saying, "beating or killing someone strictly because of his or her race or color or religion is really bad, but beating or killing someone because you want to rob him or her, well, that's not quite such a big deal."

Hate violence should be punished, but so should violence committed for other motives. We already have laws that deal with hate (and other) violence. They are the laws against murder, assault, battery, arson, vandalism, and other crimes. Read them. You will find that these laws don't allow these acts to be committed for any reason, including hate.

Paul Milligan
Modesto, California

HEALTH CARE COSTS

I can really relate to Jeff Horner's letter regarding health care costs in Wisconsin (Letters, September 2002). As a retiree, I am facing a 15 percent premium increase this year.

In his column, President Weaver notes that the NEA is "2.7 million members strong" (President's Viewpoint, September). In the same

issue, I also noticed a full-page ad for the NEA Members Auto and Home Insurance Program. How hard could it be for the NEA leadership to negotiate with a national health care provider to provide health care for all its active and retired members and their families?

School districts could return the money allocated for benefits packages to teachers' salaries and get out of the health care business. Maybe the NEA could even design a self-funded plan as many districts have done.

As Mr. Horner points out, NEA members generate more than a quarter billion dollars in revenue. I agree with his point that we need to organize a block of customers that any health care system would gladly accommodate, or in the case of self-funding, administrate. Maybe we could even make the drug companies stand and deliver!

As President Weaver points out in his column, "When our NEA family is focused and united, there is nothing we cannot accomplish."

Janet L. Love
Surprise, Arizona

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

After reading letters about "No Child Left Behind," bonuses that won't work, and the optimum size for high schools (Letters, September 2002), and after reflecting upon my experiences as a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), I felt compelled to speak out in favor of the National Board Certification process.

There are more than 16,000 National Board Certified Teachers in the country in 24 different certificate areas. Another 19,000 teachers are waiting for their scores from the 2001-02 application cycle. These teachers are virtually unanimous in testifying that the National Board Certification process is the most rigorous professional development experience of their entire careers.

The "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" requires states to put a "highly qualified" teacher in every public school classroom by 2005. Expanding the pool of National Board Certified Teachers will go a long way toward making that goal a reality.

NEA early on recognized the value of National Board Certification and was an early leader in the foundation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the establishment of National Board Standards in the various certification fields.

NEA offers *A Candidate's Guide to National Board Certification* online at www.nea.org/nationalboard/images/02NBCguide.pdf to guide members through the National Board Certification process. You can find additional information at the official website of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards located at www.nbpts.org.

Edwin C. Epps
Spartanburg, South Carolina

INSPIRING TEACHER

I was so thankful to read the article about Celia Folkman Amster in your last issue before the summer (People, May 2002).

I am 38-years-old and embarking on a teaching career. I want to teach children who have difficulty reading.

I currently am a student at Ohio Valley College in Vienna, West Virginia. Although I am a little anxious about teaching, I know I will be a qualified teacher after attending this college. I know I'll teach from my heart because this is something I was meant to do. Thank you for the story, it has given me more support than you will ever know.

Chandra Lynch
Vienna, West Virginia

RELIEF FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

I just finished reading "The Future of IDEA," (Inside Scoop, April 2002). I hope the changes the NEA is working for make it into the next Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If they don't, the shortage of special education teachers, which already is serious, will get much worse very quickly. Special education teachers need relief from the impossible demands placed on them, and they need them quickly.

I am an elementary special education teacher drowning in paperwork. I must try to make impossible schedules work while I individualize instruction for 17 students in three grades and six separate classrooms.

Thanks for what you are doing to help, and also thanks to the NEA. I plan to make the Illinois senators and congress members hear my voice and what it is like for me and thousands of other special education teachers just like me.

Laureen Allison
East Peoria, Illinois

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of four ways:

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- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday, click on "Reader Services," and fill in the "Letter to the Editor" section.
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY REG WEAVER

Our People Power

It's time to organize and mobilize to elect pro-public education candidates—without regard to party affiliation.

"Don't hassle me with politics and campaigns. I just want to close my door and teach." In my many years as a teacher and Association leader, it seems like I've heard that refrain a million times!

While I understand why some of our colleagues say this, I respectfully disagree. Why? Because the harsh, cold reality is that just about every important decision involving our schools and classrooms is ultimately made by politicians.

Our elected officials decide whether to increase school budgets—or to slash them. They decide whether vouchers will be in place, thereby stripping already financially strapped districts of much needed dollars—or whether they will be rejected. They decide how much schools will pay—or not pay—to attract quality personnel. They make hundreds of decisions—decisions that determine the fate of our schools and the children we teach.

My friends, we have a professional responsibility to mobilize in the political arena. I guarantee you that other major professions and groups—doctors, lawyers, the National Rifle Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, and so many more—are actively involved in the political process. And we must be, too. After all, we are not a special interest. We are a very special interest, because we are standing up for children and public education.

And let us be clear. We don't care whether a candidate is a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent. In each race, we have a duty to size up the candidates objectively, and then support the one who stands most strongly for children and public schools. I am heartened that in recent years we have found more and more Republican candidates who fit that bill. I expect to find many more this year and in the future.

"We have a professional responsibility to mobilize in the political arena."

The stakes in this year's election are incredibly high. Because of the recent economic downturn, state legislatures across America are swinging the budget ax—canceling after-school programs, increasing class sizes, and freezing salaries. Public education detractors, energized by the Supreme Court's pro-voucher ruling last spring, are pushing their privatization schemes more fiercely than ever. The new federal education law is ratcheting up the mania to test, test, test.

We must speak up! We must strategize, organize, and mobilize! We must flex our people power! We are 2.7 million members strong—one in every 100 Americans. NEA is everywhere. We are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles in more than 13,000 communities all across America who teach the students.

And we offer a powerful vision—a vision that is at the heart of the American dream. We want every child to have access to a quality public education, free from fear or intimidation, in an atmosphere that is safe and conducive to good teaching and learning. We can only realize this vision if we are active in the political arena, if we speak up, organize, and work our hearts out this autumn for pro-public education candidates.

So let me make a request. I want you, as an individual, to get active and get involved. I also want you to speak to 10 other people in your community. Tell them about all the good things happening in your public schools. And urge them to support the candidates who will keep those good things happening in the future.

In short, in this year's election, I am asking you to make a difference. I know I can count on you!

Comments? E-mail Reg Weaver at RegWeaver@nea.org.

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Bridging the Great Divide

Our challenge: Make sure the immigrant's daughter and CEO's son have the same opportunities.

BY MARY-BETH LANG

I've been thinking a lot these days about the new education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and in no small measure because of where I live and where I work—two places with great people, but as educational opportunities go, disparate worlds apart.

Both cities are in Connecticut, and they're divided by a quaint little stream known as Rooster River. On the west side of the Rooster is Fairfield, where I've lived and raised my children for 27 years; on the east is Bridgeport, where I've taught for 32 years. Maps often show a faint dotted line to represent the Rooster, but it might as well be a big blue splotch—for the ocean-sized gap in education offered to children in those two places.

My children attended an elementary school with spacious classrooms, a well-stocked library, an all-purpose room for lunch and scout meetings, as well as a separate gym, fully-equipped play-ground, and two ball fields. They had specialists, full-time nurses, and lots of music and art. In high school, my daughter had access to a full range of Advanced Placement courses, and when she and her friends left high school, they went to some of the finest universities in the world.

I'd love to take all the credit for my children's academic achievement, but the truth is, it just would not have happened without the excellent Fairfield public schools.

How different the stories are on the other side of the Rooster River. Frankly, the Bridgeport schools face serious, though not unique, challenges. Families speak a variety of languages, the population is poorer and more transient, the educational levels of the parents are generally lower, and students enter the primary grades with less preschool experience.

You'd think in situations like this, all hands would be on deck to find the resources to help compensate for these deficits. But if you visited the Bridgeport schools, you'd be set straight. Old, crowded schools stand surrounded, not by grassy playgrounds but by asphalt parking lots. Most schools have no recreation areas and must hold gym classes in the halls or lunchrooms. The libraries are frequently stacked with warehouse overstocks.

Good education can occur in old buildings and, to be sure, we have dedicated teachers in Bridgeport providing wonderful experiences for their students. But they are fighting an uphill battle.

Many students don't have access to the specialists they need, or to full-time nurses, or to comprehensive music and art programs. Teacher turnover is high, as certified teachers can—and do—find higher-paying jobs with better working conditions in neighboring towns. Class sizes get held in line only by our union contract and then only after an annual filing of a contract grievance. There's a critical shortage of substitute teachers. When a teacher is absent, students are often scattered into other classrooms, a practice that is disruptive to their learning and to the already-overcrowded classes to which they're assigned.

And that's just the start.

As educators, we know what has to be done—and so do many lawmakers. The new education law includes requirements to close the achievement gap for low-income and minority students. But ensuring that all students and teachers meet high standards cannot come without an infusion of new resources.

In Bridgeport, we already have three schools identified as "needing improvement." Three years ago, these schools received additional funding from our state surplus. But for the last two years, this funding has been cut dramatically as our state grapples with budget shortfalls. I fear that the new federal mandates will only serve to hurt these schools more, just as it will others like it nationwide.

Strengthening teacher quality also will not be possible without increased funding either. In Connecticut, we have a statewide teacher training and mentoring program known as BEST that works wonderfully in many suburbs. But in Bridgeport, lack of funding has hampered the program, and new teachers just don't get the assistance and resources they need—and that would encourage them to stick around.

We already know where some of the gaps in funding are: Title I fully serves only 40 percent of students eligible for assistance, for example, and the federal government continues to underfund its portion of the special education budget. Now the President has proposed federal cuts for high-quality teacher training, and a freeze for after-school and bilingual educational programs.

Mike Lydick

Mary-Beth Lang says lawmakers must ante up funds to help fix educational disparities in areas like hers.

I have urged Congress to provide the necessary resources, for without such help, our schools are simply being set up to fail.

But all of us have to get on board. We must write and call our lawmakers, locally and nationally, and make sure they know the human costs of their decisions. The reasons for disparities in areas like mine are complex, and while we can argue about whether the fault lies with the parents, society, or our public institutions—we know for sure that it doesn't lie with the children. The daughter of a newly arrived immigrant comes into the world as innocent as the son of a CEO. Our challenge is to make sure they have the same opportunities.

This is the message we must take to the city councils, to the state capitols, to Congress. If we believe our education system is really the foundation of tomorrow's society, we have no choice. ✔

Mary-Beth Lang is the president of the Bridgeport Education Association in Connecticut.

It's back. A totally redesigned and updated version of the NEA homepage www.nea.org is up and running and with it is a fresh version of *NEA Today Online*.

On the opening page of the NEA website, you'll find *NEA Today* prominently listed under "NEA Publications" on the left side of the main screen. Publications is one of eight major topics the entire site is split into.

Bill Fischer
editor

Click on *"NEA Today"* and you'll go to the contents of the current issue, the October issue. Click on a headline and you'll get the complete text of nearly every article included in the print version of the magazine.

The newly designed site allows you to scroll through one story while links to the rest of the content remain visible in a column next to the article you're reading.

If you're looking for back issues, they're also easy to find. Just click on "Archives" on the *NEA Today Online* site, and you'll be presented with a menu of issues dating back to September 1997. You can also search the six years of issues—nearly 50 issues in all, by typing in a key word in the search box located at the top of the archives page.

Above the contents and alongside the archives link is the new reader services section. Click there and you'll go to a screen that allows you to communicate with *NEA Today* staff. You can get on the e-mail list for regular updates about changes to the *NEA Today Online* website. Or you can write a letter to the editor, submit a story idea, and change your address.

You can still vote on the current debate question by clicking on the "yes" or "no" buttons, and when you do, you'll get back a tally of how you and your colleagues voted.

We appreciate your patience over the past several months as the new NEA website and *NEA Today Online* were redesigned and new content added.

We invite your feedback.

Bill Fischer

Making Politics Work for You

Sick of IDEA being underfunded? Need more resources for your students or *yourself*? Politicians can help—if you elect one who's on your side.

Stand Up and Be Counted

Why? Because politicians impact your classroom and your pocketbook.

It's easy to see why New Mexico NEA member Patrick Sanchez has been working tirelessly this fall to bring about sweeping changes in next month's elections.

For eight years, the sitting governor in New Mexico, Gary Johnson, has been locked in a stalemate with the state legislature over school issues. In 2001, Johnson vetoed an omnibus reform bill that would have committed nearly a quarter billion new dollars to educational improvement, including innovative teacher licensing and a new beginning teacher salary of $30,000. Johnson's own initiatives—chiefly voucher schemes straight out of the far-right strategy manual—have gone nowhere. Meanwhile, critical school needs go unmet and pay remains poor (see chart below—New Mexico ranks 46th).

Art and physical education programs have been cut, school nurse and counseling positions eliminated, and "huge numbers of professionals have left to work in Texas, Arizona, and Colorado, which all pay more," says Sanchez, who teaches at Lynn Middle School in Las Cruces. "It's been horrible."

The ultimate insult was losing the state's Public Employee Bargaining Act—a provision passed in 1992 that gave all public employees statutory protection for collective bargaining.

Photos by Christ Chavez

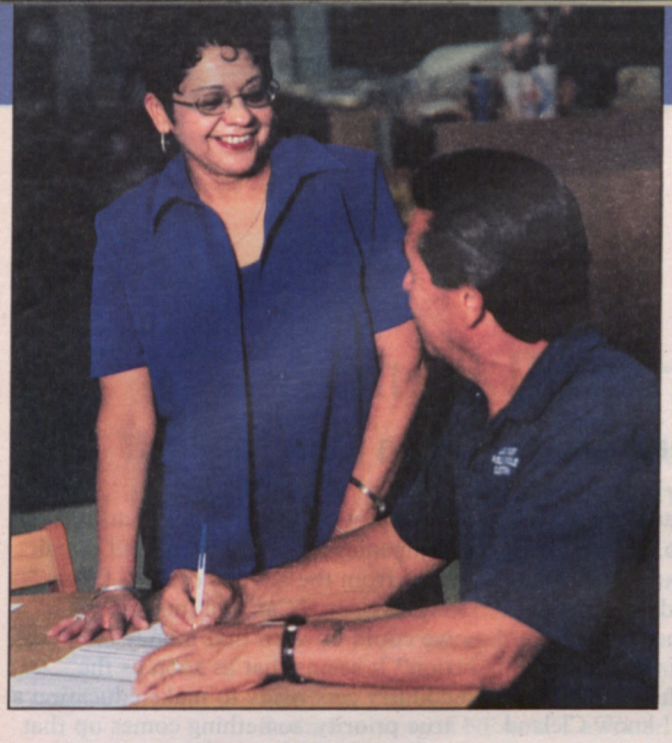
Patrick Sanchez campaigns for gubernatorial candidate Bill Richardson. "It's all about voter turnout—that's where our work can have the greatest impact."

The bargaining law contained a "sunset" clause that required legislative action to renew it. Two times, the legislature voted to repeal the sunset clause, and both times Johnson vetoed the repeal. As a result, school employees' bargaining rights are once again at the whim of local school boards.

Politics and Pocketbooks: Average Teacher Salaries 2000-01

1. New Jersey	$ 53,281 *	18. Washington	$ 42,137	36. Utah	$ 36,441
2. Connecticut	$ 52,693	19. Wisconsin	$ 42,122	37. Idaho	$ 36,375
3. California	$ 52,480	20. Oregon	$ 41,711	38. Maine	$ 36,373
4. New York	$ 52,040	21. North Carolina	$ 41,151	39. Arizona	$ 36,302 *
5. Michigan	$ 50,694 *	22. Nevada	$ 40,443 *	40. Kansas	$ 35,901
6. Pennsylvania	$ 49,528	23. Virginia	$ 40,197	41. West Virginia	$ 35,888
7. District of Columbia	$ 48,704	24. Hawaii	$ 40,052	42. Wyoming	$ 34,678
8. Rhode Island	$ 48,474 *	25. Colorado	$ 39,184	43. Arkansas	$ 34,641
9. Alaska	$ 48,123	26. Texas	$ 38,361	44. Oklahoma	$ 34,499
10. Illinois	$ 47,847	27. New Hampshire	$ 38,301	45. Nebraska	$ 34,175
11. Massachusetts	$ 47,789	28. Vermont	$ 38,254	46. New Mexico	$ 33,785
12. Delaware	$ 47,047	29. Florida	$ 38,230	47. Louisiana	$ 33,615
13. Maryland	$ 45,963	30. Alabama	$ 37,956 *	48. Montana	$ 33,249
National Average	$ 43,335 *	31. South Carolina	$ 37,938	49. Mississippi	$ 31,954
14. Indiana	$ 43,311	32. Tennessee	$ 37,431	50. North Dakota	$ 30,891
15. Ohio	$ 42,764	33. Missouri	$ 36,722	51. South Dakota	$ 30,265
16. Georgia	$ 42,216	34. Kentucky	$ 36,589		
17. Minnesota	$ 42,212	35. Iowa	$ 36,479		

* Estimated. Source: NEA Research



Irma Valdespino, president of the Classified School Employees Council of Las Cruces, registers a member to vote. "It's up to us to change things."

This fall, Sanchez and his New Mexico colleagues are determined to put a public education supporter in the governor's office. Their choice: Bill Richardson, former Secretary of Energy and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations during the Clinton administration. "He has a history of being a strong negotiator," says Las Cruces member Becky King, "and that's exactly what's needed to work with both Democrats and Republicans in the legislature."

Richardson has vowed to take action to support teacher quality and address the state's teacher shortage. Just as important, he has pledged to make passage of a public employee collective bargaining act a top priority in the 2003 legislative session.

Irma Valdespino, a bilingual program education assistant and president of the Classified School Employees Council of Las Cruces, says Richardson has met twice with members of her local and promises to be "an education-friendly governor." Members in Las Cruces also are stumping for Democrat John Arthur Smith in his race for the Second Congressional District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The importance of electing strong leadership really hit home after the state lost its collective bargaining act. The former school board in Las Cruces, frequently hostile to its education employees, welcomed the demise of collective bargaining. Members of NEA-Las Cruces and the Classified School Employees Council of Las Cruces (a unified NEA-AFT local) joined together to identify worthy candidates to fill three school board positions.

"We hired someone to do public relations for the three candidates we supported," says King, a first-grade teacher at Valley View Elementary School. "We organized, we delegated jobs, we called people, we went door-to-door. And in the end, all three of them won." In a matter of weeks, the new school board agreed to reinstate collective bargaining and "a new line of communication opened up," says King.

Sanchez has carved time out of his hectic fall schedule for campaigning to ensure a similar victory in the race for governor. "We'll do voter registration drives. We'll go door-to-door to get out the vote," says Sanchez. "It's all about voter turnout, and that's where our work can have the greatest impact."

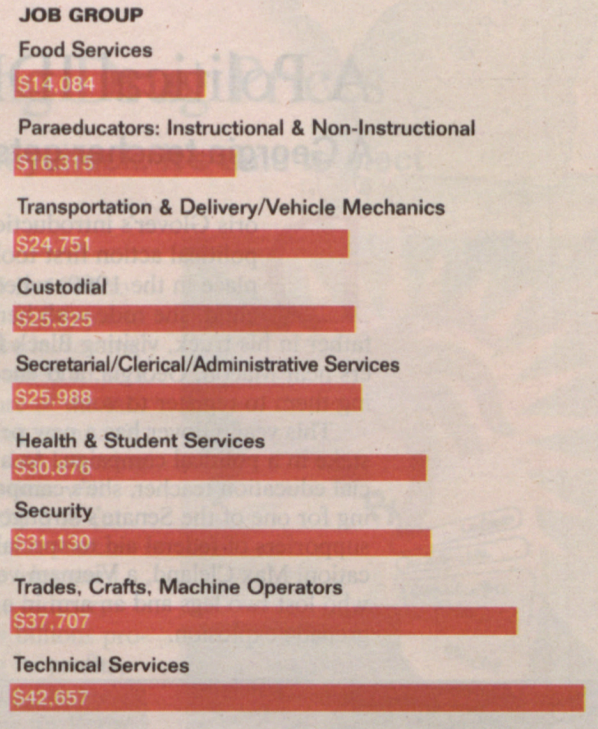
You don't even have to leave your home to make a difference, Sanchez adds. If we all talk to our own families and make sure that they're getting at least a few other people to vote for a pro-public education candidate, that can help win a race.

"It's up to us to change things," says Valdespino, who helps register eligible voters. "If all of us get out and vote, it will make a tremendous difference." ✔

—John O'Neil

Average Salaries for ESP 2001-02

By NEA ESP Job Group



NEA estimates of the average annual 2001-02 salary for full-time education support professionals, defined as those who work 30 hours or more per week.

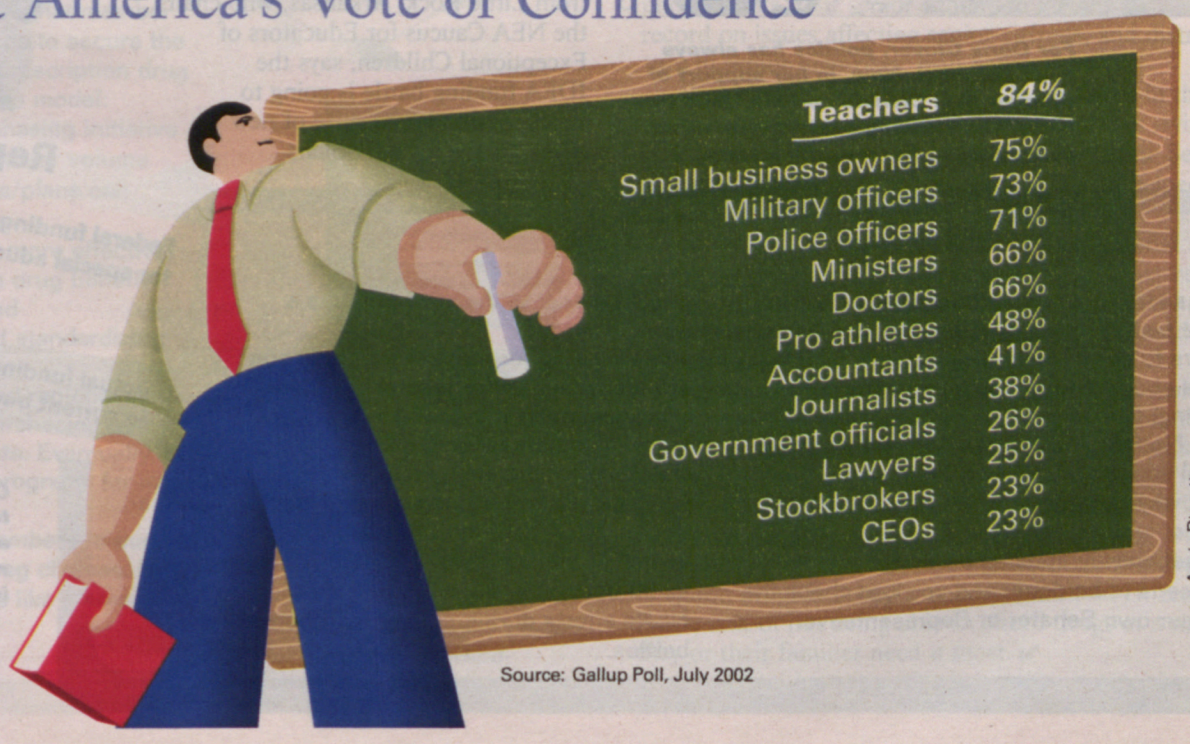
Source: NEA Research

Teachers Get America's Vote of Confidence

You may not make as much as a CEO or a pro baseball player, but your stock has a lot more currency than theirs in the eyes of the American public.

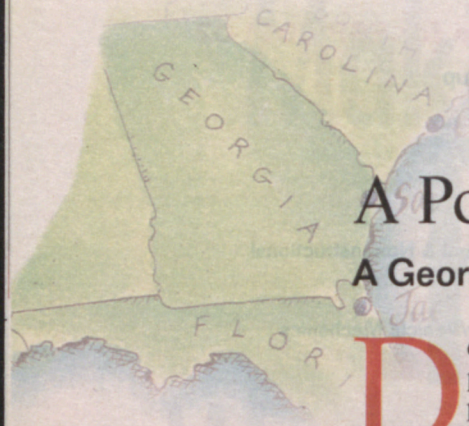
In a recent Gallup Poll, Americans ranked teachers as the most trusted group of people in the country.

And that means they'll listen when educators speak out. This voting season, tell your friends and political leaders what it takes to improve public education. And get out the vote!



Annie Bissett

Source: Gallup Poll, July 2002



A Political IDEA

A Georgia teacher gets personal to back a senator and get more IDEA funding.

Doris Glover's introduction to political action first took place in the 1960s when, as a child, she rode with her father in his truck, visiting Black farmers near Macon, Georgia, and encouraging them to register to vote.

This year, Glover has a new personal stake in a political campaign. As a special education teacher, she's campaigning for one of the Senate's strongest supporters of federal aid to special education: Max Cleland, a Vietnam veteran who lost two legs and an arm in a grenade explosion.

Caroline Joe

For Doris Glover, politics has always been personal. Now, in her support of Senator Max Cleland and his stand on IDEA, she's calling everyone from her colleagues to her sorority sisters.

Glover, who teaches at Bethune Middle School in DeKalb, notes that many of her students would be better off today if they'd been identified and helped much earlier in their school careers. But it takes staff to keep children from falling through the cracks, and that means money. "I know Cleland is committed to seeing the money put there to make sure no child is left behind," says Glover.

Back in 1975 when the special education law now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was first passed, Congress promised to pay 40 percent of the cost of special education. But the promise has never been kept. The latest federal budget provides just 17 percent.

This year, IDEA is up for reauthorization, and all sorts of changes are possible—good and bad. So Glover feels it's especially important to have pro-public education leaders in Congress voting on it.

And she's supporting her candidate with her own style of politics, person-to-person.

"I'm making phone calls and sending letters to my college sorority sisters and members of my alumni association. I've invited Senator Cleland to meet the people at my church in Atlanta. I'll be talking to my friends and family from the Macon area, too," she explains.

A commission appointed by President Bush disappointed NEA this year when it refused to recommend full funding for IDEA. Now NEA is driving to get Congress to improve IDEA. Leading this campaign is a team of 25 educators known as the "IDEA cadre."

Charles Nelson, a cadre member from Little Rock, Arkansas, who chairs the NEA Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children, says the IDEA funding battle is going to be all the harder because of new demands for federal dollars.

"Money is going to be spent to save companies like WorldCom and the airlines from the actions of their CEOs," says Nelson. "Can you imagine what we could do with that money in education? It seems that as soon as the country gets ready to make education a true priority, something comes up that pulls us back down. But our democracy can't exist without a well-educated citizenry."

Charlene Christopher, a cadre member and special education teacher in Norfolk, Virginia, adds that funding is the top priority, but not the only one.

Also high on the list are reducing paperwork, bolstering professional development, instituting reasonable class size and case load limits, and placing more emphasis on early intervention.

This fall's elections make this month a crucial phase in the fight to improve IDEA. And potentially, educators are in a very strong position. NEA members alone make up close to one percent of all Americans. An amazing 29 percent of registered voters either are teachers themselves or have close family members who are current or former teachers, according to a recent poll commissioned by the Public Education Network and *Education Week*.

And that doesn't count sorority sisters. ✔

—Alain Jehlen

Annie Bissett

Congress has never come close to funding 40 percent of special education costs, as it promised when it passed the federal law in 1975.

Five Minutes a Week for a Better IDEA

As Congress tackles the reauthorization of IDEA, there will be fast-moving developments and a need for educators to send timely messages to members of Congress about the real-world impact of what they are doing. Charlene Christopher, a special educator in Norfolk, Virginia, and a member of the NEA special education cadre, notes that the best and easiest way to make a difference is to become an NEA cyber-lobbyist.

"You'll get weekly updates on what's happening and what needs to be done, and you can check the record of your own Senator or Representative," she says.

"It takes less than five minutes a week."

To sign up for those five-minute contributions to a better federal law, go to www.nea.org/lac, the NEA Website's Legislative Action Center. Click on "Become a cyber-lobbyist."

Even without signing up, you can get information on IDEA and other important education issues at the Legislative Action Center, as well as fill out a questionnaire that will help to guide NEA's efforts during crucial reauthorization battles.

Wanted: Prescription for Easing Drug Prices

Rising drug costs are taking dollars out of your paycheck. It's time to elect leaders who can break the impasse.

Like members around the country, Jean and Jim Scheu, retired teachers in Plymouth, Minnesota, regularly buy prescription drugs.

They don't buy them from their local pharmacist, however. The Scheus, members of Education Minnesota-Retired, a merged NEA-AFT affiliate, buy their drugs through a mail-order service operating in Canada.

By ordering from Canada, the Scheus, both 75, spend about $230 for a three-month supply of their medically required drugs. That's about one-third of the cost charged by local pharmacies this side of the border. The discrepancy angers Jean Scheu. "Why should Canadians pay so much less for prescriptions?" she says. "The price should be the same for everybody."

Welcome to the shameful world of prescription drug pricing, where drug companies spend millions to entice doctors to prescribe you the newest brand-name drugs, while many hard-working education employees find their budgets stretched because their health insurance has inadequate drug coverage.

"Across the U.S., health plan sponsors of small, medium, and large size education employee groups are facing hefty insurance premium increases of 20 percent or more for 2003," says NEA staffer Carol Malone. "Prescription drug spending is directly responsible for more than 35 percent of this overall health premium increase."

As a result, health plan sponsors have been shifting a greater portion of the cost of prescription drugs to employees and their covered dependents. As the average cost of a prescription drug has risen from $3 in 1970 to $25 in 1990 to $65 in 2001, members are increasingly being asked to pick up more of the tab.

Annie Bissett

Drug companies claim that lowering their prices will force them to cut back on research and development. But the industry spends billions protecting its profits, according to the Alliance for Retired Americans, a coalition of more than 2.5 million union retirees. While the after-tax profits of Fortune 500 companies in 2000 averaged 4.9 percent, the after-tax median profits of pharmaceutical companies was a whopping 18.6 percent of revenues. Drug companies in 2000 spent nearly $2.5 billion on direct-to-consumer advertising to convince you to "ask your doctor about" the latest pricey brand-name drug.

All members should be concerned about the escalating costs of prescription drugs, but retirees like the Scheus are particularly hard-hit. The average annual amount each senior spends on drugs has grown from $559 in 1992 to $1,051 in 2002, but one in three lacks coverage for outpatient drugs.

The need for fair prescription drug pricing is one reason the Scheus are backing U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone in his re-election bid (see related story, page 14). Wellstone, a long-time supporter of universal health care, has been a key Congressional advocate of measures to give consumers access to cheaper generic drugs and provide a prescription drug benefit through Medicare.

Jean and Jim Scheu are spending one day each week this fall working for his campaign. They plan to participate in phone banks, visit senior centers to talk about Wellstone's record on issues affecting senior citizens, and distribute literature in senior high-rises, Jean Scheu says.

Prescription drug reform also looms large in the candidacy of NEA-recommended Chellie Pingree, who is trying to unseat U.S. Senator Susan Collins of Maine. As Maine Senate majority leader, Pingree fought the drug lobby and helped win passage of two model state laws to control costs.

At press time, the U.S. Senate had considered and rejected several different bills to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare, although it did pass legislation to facilitate the reimportation of drugs from Canada to the United States (which would ease the way to lower prices).

The current impasse on prescription drugs makes it even more important to scrutinize candidates' records this election season to ensure they have constructive ideas for addressing the issue. "During this election, members should support candidates who not only support a prescription drug benefit for Medicare but are also serious about controlling astronomical prescription drug costs," says Malone. "Until the cost of prescription drugs is brought under control, all citizens face the future risk of not being able to afford drugs at a time when they or their families need it most. ✔

—John O'Neil

Pooling for Savings

The NEAFT Partnership is preparing a model to address the high costs of prescription drugs.

Currently, in most states, NEA and AFT members receive their prescription drug benefits through the health plans offered by their school district. As a result, the levels of coverage offered members—and the costs—vary widely.

During the past year, NEA and AFT researched the feasibility of combining NEA and AFT members into statewide or regional "pools" for the purpose of purchasing or administering prescription drug benefits. Pooled purchasing of drug benefits permits tremendous savings and improvements in quality of care.

The NEAFT Partnership has developed a blueprint, available this fall, that member plans can utilize to join forces to secure the lowest possible pricing for prescription drug benefits. The principles of the model:

- **Establish a group purchasing initiative joining together plans for greater volume savings than school districts/plans can obtain on their own;**
- **Transition over time to more effective management of prescription drug benefit use to maximize savings; and**
- **Gradually move toward standardizing benefit plan designs.**

Under the plan, states and regional models would aggregate their purchasing power to negotiate volume discounts. Eventually, they would also offer education programs for members on specific diseases.

Better information for members to make decisions on prescription drug choices. More affordable coverage. Sounds like a prescription for success.

Huge sales of popular drugs are fueled by direct-to-consumer advertising, which encourages you to ask your doctor about expensive brand-name drugs.

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Breathe new life into assignments and make field trips more memorable with included iPhoto™ software. With its intuitive interface, teachers and students can import pictures from a digital camera in a snap, print them, create slide shows or email them with ease.

Enhance your lesson plan with eMac's included iMovie™ software. Just shoot your footage, plug your camcorder into eMac's FireWire™ port and edit away. iMovie's simple interface makes it easy for teachers and students to make their own video projects.

Grab your students' full attention with lush, powerful sound from eMac's built-in, 16-watt, digitally amplified speakers. Or, keep your classroom peacefully quiet by having your students plug headphones into eMac's convenient audio-out jack.

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eMac

NEA's Kind of Candidate

Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone says the federal government should fund education mandates. That's one reason NEA backs his re-election.

Larry Salzman

"Teachers and their work need to be valued," says U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, here reading to St. Paul youngsters as teacher Jean Jones looks on.

Early this year, President Bush signed into law the costly Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which calls for annual reading and math tests, sanctions for schools that fail to display "adequate yearly progress," and strengthened quality provisions for teachers and Title I paraeducators—while failing to fulfill a 26-year-old federal promise to pay 40 percent of the cost of special education.

The statute's mandate, "no child left behind," is critical, but one the feds haven't fully funded and cash-strapped state governments may never be able to meet.

Like other congressional candidates recommended by NEA, Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone is pushing to make the federal government—which now pays only 9.4 percent of the nation's public education costs and 17 percent of the cost of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—as accountable as any educator for student achievement.

This two-term senator challenges his colleagues to choose between increased education funding and tax cuts for the very wealthy. Wellstone opposes vouchers and voucher-like private tuition tax credits and "strongly advocates both guaranteed full funding for IDEA and increased resources for essential programs such as Title I," says NEA lobbyist Joel Packer.

"Senator Wellstone keeps saying, 'You can't improve education on a tin-cup budget,'" adds NEA Government Relations Director Diane Shust. "That's a major reason he and most of the Minnesota delegation voted against the final version of ESEA."

Yet Minnesota's senior senator has not stopped trying to improve this law. With NEA support, Wellstone won passage of an ESEA amendment specifying that the new annual tests must measure higher-order thinking skills and serve as useful tools for educators.

Packer, who observes Wellstone in action, says this lawmaker's a hard-working pragmatist who cares deeply about kids and public education.

"Senator Wellstone works the issues and reaches across the aisle to build coalitions," the lobbyist concludes. "Plus, he visits classrooms and is in direct touch with educators' concerns."

"Paul Wellstone is always in classrooms; not many senators do that," points out Jean Jones, a first-grade teacher and union steward at Prosperity Heights Elementary in St. Paul. "He hears about the realities we face, especially in urban areas, where the only thing that seems to matter is standardized test scores."

Wellstone hears about it *all*, including poorly funded special ed mandates that force districts to raid general education budgets, pitting student against student. And Education Minnesota members constantly inform him about class size increases and program cuts, teacher layoffs, and health care cost hikes that erode educators' paychecks.

All this feeds the senator's determination to push for more federal assistance for education and a health care system that covers every American.

Desiree Payne, an executive board member of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers, welcomes the senator's call for full IDEA funding. "The learning disabled are not getting adequate support," she says.

And Payne, an employment services counselor at the St. Paul Workforce Center for Employment and Training, notes that added federal resources would be helpful in her own work. "I work with welfare recipients, mostly minor moms who must attend school," she says. "We never know what our budget will be from year to year."

Jones, who has endured cutbacks in her own Title I school (a reduction in teaching positions recently increased her class size from 19 to 27) and the teacher-bashing of Governor Jesse Ventura, is moved by Senator Wellstone's concern for educators.

"Senator Wellstone works issues and builds coalitions. Plus, he visits classrooms and is in touch with educators' concerns."

—NEA lobbyist Joel Packer

"In his campaign ads, Paul has said that teachers and their work need to be valued," says Jones. "Teachers need to hear *both* things."

Jones serves on the governing board of the Minnesota AFL-CIO (Education Minnesota is also affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which is part of the AFL-CIO), where she gets to see another side of Paul Wellstone.

"Paul identifies with working people and their families, knows labor issues and what's at stake, and has a labor

voting record that's second to none," Jones says. "He walks picket lines and it's not for show. He'll picket whether a camera crew is there or not."

Jones sees the life challenges faced by students at Prosperity Heights Elementary, 75 percent of whom live in poverty, so there's something else she appreciates about Wellstone.

"Paul understands that poverty, violence, jobs, and education are all interconnected issues," she says. "You can't just pull one piece out without looking at the others."

Get the Word Out!

Add up Wellstone's plusses, and it's clear why NEA recommends him over opponent Norm Coleman, a tuition tax credit proponent who created an adversarial relationship with city employees when he served as mayor of St. Paul.

"There was constant friction between Coleman and city workers over health care and budget issues," notes Jones, who also serves on the local AFL-CIO labor council. "He exhibits an 'If you don't like it, tough' attitude and views public employees as people who simply 'use' tax dollars.

"We know that Coleman's friends have deep pockets," Jones says. "But there are a lot of us educators, and if each does our little piece we can do a lot to re-elect Paul Wellstone."

In this neck-and-neck race, "word of mouth is more important than any political mailing," adds Desiree Payne.

In this and every other campaign, she says, "you need to let people at the water cooler know what the NEA-recommended candidate stands for, and how important the issues—like full funding for special education—are for everyone."

James Yang

In addition to Paul Wellstone, NEA recommends these other U.S. Senate candidates for election on November 5: Susan Parker (**Alabama**), Mark Pryor (**Arkansas**), Tom Strickland (**Colorado**), Max Cleland (**Georgia**), Alan Blinken (**Idaho**), Tom Harkin (**Iowa**), Richard Durbin (**Illinois**), Lois Combs Weinberg (**Kentucky**), Mary Landrieu (**Louisiana**), Chellie Pingree (**Maine**), John Kerry (**Massachusetts**), Carl Levin (**Michigan**), Jean Carnahan (**Missouri**), Max Baucus (**Montana**), Jeanne Shaheen (**New Hampshire**), Gloria Tristani (**New Mexico**), David Walters (**Oklahoma**), Bill Bradbury (**Oregon**), Jack Reed (**Rhode Island**), Alex Sanders (**South Carolina**), Tim Johnson (**South Dakota**), Bob Clement (**Tennessee**), Ron Kirk (**Texas**), and Jay Rockefeller (**West Virginia**).

At press time, NEA was recommending Dan Blue in a delayed North Carolina primary election. ✔

Three Reasons To Put Friends of Public Education in Congress

On November 5, your vote for NEA-recommended candidates for U.S. Congress will make a critical difference for public education. Just three of the issues at stake:

1. Control of Congress by supporters of public education. In the evenly divided Senate, just one or two votes can make or break key education legislation. During the last session, a proposal to maintain class size reduction legislation was defeated by 48-50, while a bill to fund emergency school repairs went down by 49-50. And in the House, a bipartisan school modernization bill, which would make $25 billion in interest-free bonds available for everything from safety repairs to new construction, remains stalled because the leadership refuses to allow a vote.

2. A child-friendly federal education budget. Both IDEA and the mandate-heavy Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—requiring annual reading and math testing and authorizing Title I, teacher quality, rural education, and many other critical education programs—need unprecedented levels of funding. Whoever controls Congress will determine long-term investments in basic and early childhood education, balancing these priorities against pressures for tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

3. Vouchers and tuition tax credits. The June U.S. Supreme Court decision ruling vouchers constitutional has given voucher and private tuition tax credit proponents, including President George Bush, an added incentive to promote their cause through federal legislation. Quite simply, the "chief barrier to vouchers or tuition tax credits is the Senate," notes *Education Week*. ✔

How Do Candidates Gain NEA's Support?

The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, NEA's political action committee, was founded in 1972 to give school employees a voice when federal lawmakers make decisions about issues that affect children and public education.

NEA makes sure that the candidate—whether Republican or Democrat—measures up on the issues that educators care about before recommending a political hopeful.

The candidate must demonstrate support for:

- **Strengthening public education** through increasing funding for schools and colleges; opposing vouchers, privatization, and tuition subsidies to private and religious schools; addressing the shortage of qualified teachers; and modernizing school facilities.
- **Ensuring children's health and safety** through supporting safe schools programs; expanding Head Start; and strengthening child care, health, and nutrition programs.
- **Maximizing student learning** by reducing class sizes, ensuring early childhood education, increasing funding for special education, and expanding after-school programs and college scholarships.
- **Respecting school employees** by increasing salaries, safeguarding pensions and Social Security, including educators in decision making, and expanding funding for teacher and ESP professional development.

The Approval Process

Congressional candidate screening is conducted by NEA members at the state or local affiliate level. The process includes:

- Thorough evaluation of written responses to an NEA candidate questionnaire or a written or videotaped interview.
- Review of a candidate's record in public office, public statements, and position papers.
- Examination of the candidate's voting record and assistance on issues of concern to NEA members.

To be recommended, candidates must:

- Receive a majority vote from NEA's PAC Council, a 67-member body that includes each state affiliate president or his or her designee and representatives elected from the various NEA minority caucuses and constituencies.
- Support a majority of NEA positions described in the candidate questionnaire (state affiliate recommendations for incumbents with less than a 50 percent voting record require a two-thirds vote of NEA's PAC Council).

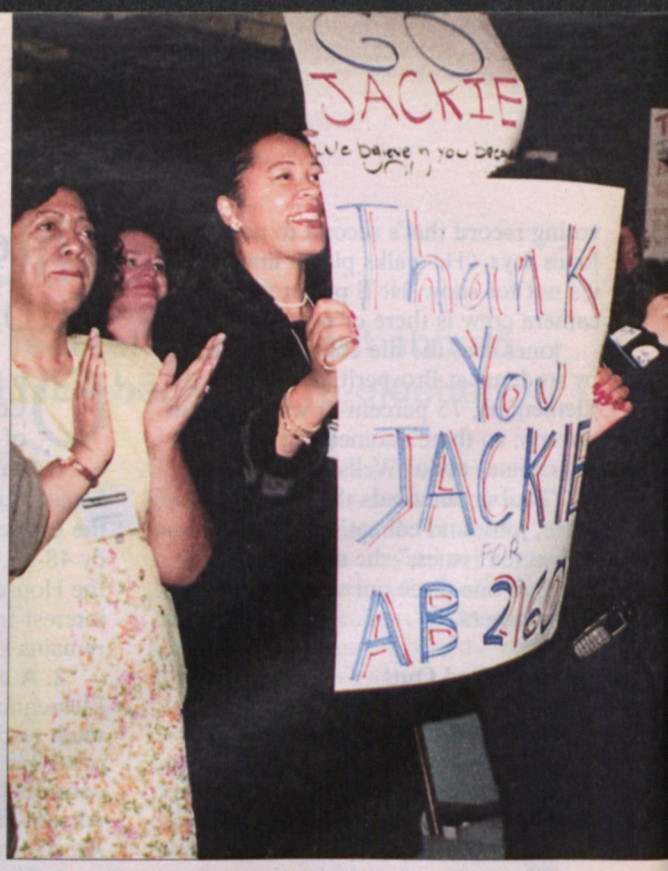
Dues Money Is Never Used

Your dues money is never given to political candidates or parties. The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education is funded exclusively through the voluntary contributions of Association members.

To find out about recommended congressional candidates and the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, contact the government relations office of your NEA state affiliate.

Needed: A Voice in Stuff That Matters

NEA members in California and Maryland push for a greater role in decisions that affect students' futures.



California Teachers Association members lobbied hard for Bill AB 2160, which would have expanded bargaining to "professional" issues. The bill, sponsored by Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg, succumbed to intense management opposition. But CTA members will continue their fight for a voice.

If you work for a certain kind of school district, you're probably fed up with top-down curriculum decisions based on fads, scripted teaching programs, powerless teacher committees, and a test-driven mentality that devalues classroom creativity.

Earlier this year, NEA affiliates in two states, California and Maryland, challenged this disturbing trend by seeking collective bargaining law changes that would give educators a greater voice in student learning. A report on this work in progress:

■ During California's last legislative session, Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg (D-Los Angeles), with support from the **California Teachers Association (CTA)**, introduced Bill AB 2160. This bill would have enhanced the state's strong teacher bargaining law, which now permits negotiations over issues such as health, welfare, and salaries; transfers and reassignments; school safety; class size; school calendars; and teacher evaluation.

AB 2160 was a bold proposal to expand the scope of bargaining to include decision-making procedures for a comprehensive list of "professional" issues. Those issues included, among other things, the selection of course content, curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials, and the development and implementation of local educational standards, professional development plans, and parent involvement programs.

This cutting-edge legislation put NEA's Golden State affiliate way out in front of a national movement for change. That didn't sit well with a powerful lobby that wasn't ready for such change: every California management group from school board members and district administrators to labor-unfriendly newspaper publishers and corporate CEOs.

Through a massive public relations campaign bankrolled by the California Business Roundtable, the opposition derided AB 2160 as a "radical grab for power" by CTA officials, predicting it would shut classroom teachers and parents out of decision making, "put the brakes" on education reform, quadruple collective bargaining costs, and "create a hostile environment" in school districts.

For those who know *anything* about the mutual, give-and-take nature of collective bargaining, these wild charges are simply stupefying.

CTA twice accepted bill amendments to answer the opponents' objections. The final version of AB 2160 called for "academic partnerships" at the district level to reach "binding agreements on the substance" of professional issues, while guaranteeing teacher participation in decision making, a substantive role for parents, and safeguards for the separation of decision making on professional issues from the collective bargaining process.

But despite a strong CTA grassroots lobbying campaign, AB 2160 sponsors fell six votes short of those needed to advance the amended bill, and legislators shelved it.

"We were surprised by the mean-spirited, nasty, anti-union rhetoric directed at CTA, the bill, and its sponsors," says CTA President Wayne Johnson. "This response told us a lot about the battles ahead."

■ While CTA members dust themselves off and plan for the next campaign to expand their professional voice, they can draw inspiration from NEA colleagues in Maryland, who last spring gained legislation that moves their education bargaining law much closer to California's gold standard.

How would you like to bargain over class size, school safety, student discipline, and curriculum? Here's what two states have achieved on that front—and how they're working to improve the profession.

The **Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA)** won passage of Senate Bill 233, which expands the scope of teacher negotiations beyond pay and working conditions to any "other matters that are mutually agreed to by the employer and employee organization."

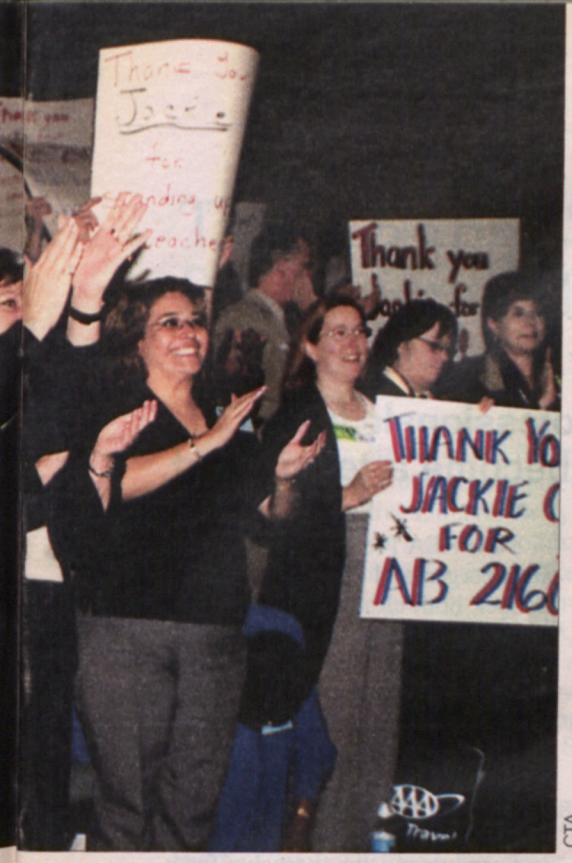
These "other matters" can involve absolutely any issue from curriculum to student discipline, with the exception of class size and the school calendar. But the new law does provide latitude to bargain over student-teacher ratios, classroom support, and the number of days in the school year.

Equally important, the law extends bargaining rights for the first time to education support professionals on Maryland's Eastern Shore—who endure lower pay and far fewer rights than counterparts in the rest of the state—and gives all Maryland ESPs the right to bargain for due process in discipline and dismissal.

MSTA waged a comprehensive two-year campaign to pass Senate Bill 233, encountering many of the same objections as CTA, right down to bogus charges that the legislation was a "grasp for control" by union officers and would shut parents out of contract talks.

But MSTA members stood their ground, arguing, among other things, that increased teacher participation in professional decision making doesn't equate to a dilution of authority, and that Senate Bill 233 would promote curriculum "stability."

"It seems every time we change superintendents, we change curriculum," Calvert Education Association



CTA

President Ann Brown told legislators. "We do not object to change, [but we do] object to the complete overhaul of the educational system, throwing out what teachers have worked so hard to put together."

MSTA's convincing arguments won some impressive allies, including the governor and lieutenant governor, more than 100 bill co-sponsors in the legislature, and a majority of the State Board of Education, which regulates teacher bargaining.

MSTA Vice President Clara Floyd says member education on the need to expand bargaining rights and grassroots lobbying made all the difference.

"Legislators had to understand that this is more than just a 'union' issue—it's a member issue," Floyd stresses. "It impacts both student learning and the retention of quality educators." ✔

—Dave Winans

For more on the California Teachers Association's campaign to give teachers a voice in their profession, go to www.cta.org/cal_educator/v6i6/feature_teachers.html.

Four Good Reasons To Give Educators a Voice

MSTA

Maryland State Teachers Association President Pat Foerster

In too many school districts across the nation, professional or "education policy" decisions are the non-negotiable prerogative of administrators—due to court or arbitration decisions, weak or non-existent bargaining laws, or simply an age-old reluctance to share authority. Here, from California and Maryland, are four powerful arguments for reversing this disturbing trend:

1. Teachers need to be treated as the professionals they are. "In California, we have a teaching workforce in which everyone is a college graduate, 50 percent have advanced degrees, and the average experience is 12-1/2 years," points out California Teachers Association President Wayne Johnson. "It's just ludicrous for teachers to have that education and experience, yet have no say over the curriculum, textbooks, and things going on in their classrooms!"

2. Educators' know-how makes them central to a child's success. "The public understands that teachers are where the rubber hits the road," says Pat Foerster, president of the Maryland State Teachers Association. "We need to drive decision making down to the district and classroom level. Classroom teachers understand how children learn and have a huge responsibility for determining what works. To exclude teachers—and support professionals—from important decisions on needed programs and resources is totally backward and potentially damaging."

CTA

California Teachers Association President Wayne Johnson

3. Take away the joy of teaching, and teachers will leave. "The joy of teaching has to do with working with kids, with the creativity of the whole thing, with seeing the light in students' eyes when they 'figure it out,' says California Teachers Association Vice President Barbara Kerr, a kindergarten and first-grade reading teacher. "If teachers don't take back their say in curriculum, there will be no more joy in teaching, and there won't be anyone left who wants to teach."

4. Teachers—especially the new ones—are *already* leaving. California state Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg, a former classroom teacher and school board member, reports that many new California teachers are leaving the profession before their fifth year. "Teachers are not quitting because of low pay; they knew they would be paid badly before they entered teaching," Goldberg says. "What [new] teachers did not know is that they would be treated like 'tall children' and be systematically denied any partnership in the academic decision making in their own classrooms." ✔

—D.W.

Life Without Bargaining: "An Awful Way To Live and Work"

If you live in a non-bargaining state, talk in California and Maryland about expanding the scope of collective negotiations might be pretty frustrating.

During this year's NEA Representative Assembly, Texas delegate Michael Miller worked hard to educate colleagues from bargaining states about the reality of working in a state where *nothing* is negotiable.

"We're handed a one-page 'contract' each May with no dollar amount—until the budget is set," says Miller, a reading specialist and NEA local affiliate president in the Grapevine-Colleyville district, near Dallas. "And we're not sure what our benefits will be in the next year because of the possibility of a financial crisis."

Even without legal negotiating rights, Miller works hard to represent his members, "teachers who do really great work with kids." A while back, he even convinced his superintendent to create a pay scale that rewards the experience of veteran teachers.

But good working relationships with administrators aren't enough. Educators need the right, set in law, to bargain a binding, collective agreement.

In Missouri, another state without a bargaining law, "nothing is binding," says Peggy Cochran, executive director of Missouri NEA (MNEA). "A school board can change any condition under which we work, except salaries, at its next meeting. Some of our largest local affiliates have bargaining agreements, but they could lose them tomorrow.

"It's an awful way to live and work," Cochran emphasizes. "Bargaining ensures you have a voice. That's why we've been campaigning for a bargaining law since 1970."

MNEA has plenty of NEA support. "We're interested in winning bargaining rights—then expanding them—wherever we can," stresses Lynn Ohman, NEA director of bargaining and member advocacy. "Without bargaining, you can't even begin to provide a consistent voice for local Associations in job security and education policy."

"If you just have 'rights' given to you by the employer, they could be taken away tomorrow," adds Wayne Johnson, president of the California Teachers Association, NEA's largest state affiliate. "You need a formal process, a voice in writing, and it needs to be in legislation."

—D.W.

Stuart Thurkill

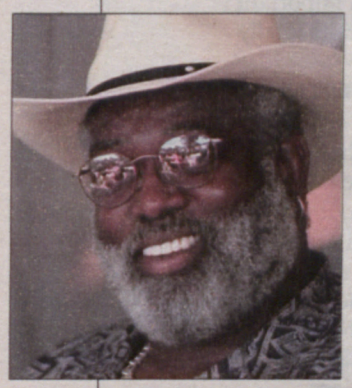
In his Texas district, says Michael Miller, teachers are "handed a one-page 'contract' each May with no dollar amount."

Big News from the Bluegrass State: Teacher-ESP Unity

NEA's Kentucky affiliate gives education support professionals full membership rights, recognizing that education has become a *team* effort.

Not very long ago, education support professionals sat—and seethed—together at a table in the back of each Kentucky Education Association delegate assembly. Although they were dues-paying NEA members, these ESPs were denied the right to vote on new KEA officers, resolutions, new business items, or any other piece of assembly business.

Kentucky support professionals, you see, weren't considered professional *enough* to be full KEA members, even though they were the equal of any teacher in the governance of NEA.



"I once felt like a stepchild. Now I've moved to the head of the table and feel accepted as part of the Association family."

—School law enforcement officer J.D. Jones, Fayette County, Kentucky

"I always felt like a stepchild sitting in the back, being given handouts," recalls J.D. Jones, a school law enforcement officer in Fayette County. Fortunately for Jones and other Kentucky ESPs, a growing number of teacher leaders shared this discomfort.

"It disturbed me—these people sitting in the back of the room as if this [were the pre-civil rights era in] Selma, Alabama," says Brent McKim, president of the 5,000-member Jefferson County Teachers Association, KEA's largest local affiliate. "Teachers have come to respect the value of ESPs over the course of time and recognize that the challenges today are so much greater. We really need a team approach in education."

The team spirit finally prevailed at KEA's 2002 delegate assembly in April, when elected teacher delegates—including the entire Jefferson County delegation—voted by 71 percent to amend the Association's constitution and bylaws to recognize ESPs as "full, active, voting" KEA members.

By September 1, the old Kentucky ESP Association (KESPA) had dissolved and ESPs had become part of a newly created unit of KEA, District 13.

This "blending" boosted the 29,000-member KEA by 3,200 full new members. Now, watching with great interest from the wings, are more than 45,000 unorganized ESPs across Kentucky.

After a 15-year struggle for full rights, 2002 was a great year for Kentucky support professionals. All five winning teacher candidates for KEA office found one thing to agree on: ESPs must be full Association partners.

New KEA President Frances Steenbergen and Vice President Kenton Cooper, both elected during the 2002 delegate assembly, made ESP inclusion a centerpiece of their campaign platforms. Both proudly note that they hold commercial driver's licenses—handy for class field trips beyond the confines of rural districts.

"I know what it takes to drive a school bus," says Steenbergen, a family and consumer science teacher from Barren County. "And I know what it takes for a support professional to work in the classroom. My sister-in-law is a classroom aide who doesn't make much money—she got a 25-cent raise for ten years of experience."

Steenbergen and Cooper have pledged to turn KEA into a certified/classified "team," beginning with a district-by-district drive to build membership and make local affiliates more active.

In June, the new KEA leaders chaired membership conferences in both Louisville and Lexington, at which teachers and ESPs alike brushed up on the basics of member recruitment and drew up district organizing plans.

This was the very first time in KEA history that teachers and ESPs had participated as equals in an Association meeting.

J.D. Jones was at the Louisville conference, just soaking it all in. "I once felt like a stepchild. Now I've moved up to the head of the table," Jones says with a grin. "Now I feel accepted as part of the family. It's a great feeling!" ✔

Photos by Brian Bohannon

Nancy Toombs (left), Kenton Cooper, and Frances Steenbergen know that teacher-ESP unity will make KEA stronger yet.

What KEA Brings to Support Professionals

The Kentucky Education Association's full inclusion of education support professionals combines valuable human resources at a time when KEA confronts challenges familiar to many NEA state affiliates, including a state budget shortfall, substandard educator pay, and soaring health insurance rates.

First and foremost, this merger will mean strength in numbers in dealing with lawmakers and school superintendents alike. "Together, we're better," stresses Henderson County head custodian Nancy Toombs, president of KEA's newly formed District 13. "With all the attacks on public education we have to all be on the same team."

"Now, when we go to the state Capitol to lobby, legislators can't divide and conquer teachers and ESPs," adds special education teacher Kenton Cooper, the KEA vice president.

On top of added political clout, ESPs now have the "prestige of being members of the largest education organization in Kentucky," says KEA President Frances Steenbergen. "In everything we do—be it working on a statewide membership plan, applying for KEA grants, or participating in Association conferences, workteams, or committee assignments—support professionals are part of us as full voting members.

"We'll also offer ESPs all of KEA's professional development opportunities," Steenbergen pledges. "If a teachers' local conducts a brain-based research workshop, we expect them to invite classified employees." ✔

Three Things Support Professionals Bring to KEA. . .

What can education support professionals offer the Kentucky Education Association?

Just for starters, they bring:

1. Tenacity. "Kentucky ESPs never give up," says District 13 Executive Director Betty Watson. "They show tenacity in the face of all odds, which is why they're so successful in activities like lobbying."

"We do have staying power," agrees Fayette County law enforcement officer J.D. Jones. "ESPs tend to stay on the job a long time. After 20, 25 years, they still want to drive that bus or clean that building. You seldom hear grumbling, except about pay—that's the number one issue." Stand clear when they talk about that one.

Wilma Hawkins

"Health insurance costs are a big issue in our county—people can't afford to live!" points out Hardin County District 6 bus driver Wilma Hawkins. "We have drivers leaving for new jobs with better pay and benefits, leaving behind new drivers at greater risk for accidents. We're hoping and expecting to work alongside teachers in the next legislative session for better health benefits."

2. Grassroots lobbying skills. Kentucky ESPs are rooted in the communities where they work and often enjoy a first-name relationship with legislators—who frequently ask for endorsements and invitations to ESP meetings.

Brent McKim

In lobbying, support professionals are quick to deliver troops where needed, strong communicators, research-savvy, and, says teacher lobbyist Brent McKim, "honest, straight-shooting people."

Starting with absolutely nothing, members of the old Kentucky ESP Association (KESPA) successfully lobbied from 1993 to 2000 for legislation guaranteeing ESPs important new rights and benefits—including due process in termination, permanent status after four years of continuous employment in a district, 12-month retirement credit and expanded sick leave benefits, and coverage (with professional development dollars) under Kentucky's Safe School Act.

And in the 2001-02 legislative session, KESPA and KEA members joined forces to successfully lobby for a mail-order pharmaceutical plan that saves school employees money on maintenance drugs and saves the state treasury $6 million over two years.

"We're teaching teachers how to share their message with lawmakers," says KEA District 13 President Nancy Toombs. "At the same time, we're holding politicians accountable, especially the ones who forget why they're there. We ESPs have a perch in the Capitol building—we catch legislators right at the top of the stairs!"

3. Devotion to kids—and excellence. To see more of her daughter, Bridgette Hollingsworth recently left a position as a skilled surgical assistant to become a Hardin County District 6 driver.

Bridgette Hollingsworth

This new ESP questions why she makes $9.06 an hour—for a five-hour day—to transport society's "most precious cargo, children," while local sanitation truck drivers earn up to $15 an hour. Children "are worth more than garbage," she says. "We're carrying our future on those roads."

Hollingsworth, who plans to become more active in KEA, sees Association involvement as a way to fight for the future of children and public education. "We can organize to make teachers better teachers, custodians better custodians, and everybody's school safe and protected," she argues.

That's the kind of drive that earned ESPs a place in the Kentucky Education Association.

"Professionalism has more to do with attitudes than degrees," concludes Brent McKim, president of the Jefferson County Teachers Association. "Excellence is about knowing what you can do and taking pride in your work. KEA and NEA's focus on improving the quality of our members' work sets us apart from other labor organizations." ✔

[KUDOS TO...]

. . . the **New Jersey Education Association**, which now includes 44,000 ESP members—13 percent of its total membership and the highest percentage of any NEA state affiliate.

Speaking at this year's state ESP conference, NJEA President Edithe Fulton said: "I tell people from other states that for the past 23 years, ESP members have been welcomed into NJEA as organizational equals with their K-12 and higher ed colleagues, and I'm enormously proud of that fact."

. . . **members of the Ithaca (New York) Paraprofessionals Association**, who have won a 21 percent wage increase for the year beginning July 1. The lowest paid IPA members will see their wages rise by $2.40 per hour this coming year, and by almost 50 percent over the next three years.

A teacher's aide receiving $6.72 per hour went to $9.36 on July 1 and will go to $10.05 in 2004. A teaching assistant who started at $7.46 goes to $9.98 in this new school year and to $10.69 in 2004. In three years, the median wage for an aide will rise to $11.65 and for an assistant to $13.15.

For 18 months, IPA campaigned for this increase alongside other affiliates of the **Tompkins County Living Wage Coalition**, composed of 31 community, religious, and labor organizations. But this would not have been possible, say IPA leaders, if these workers were not unionized and absolutely determined to win a living wage.

"These negotiations have been about dignity, respect, and hope," says IPA President Debbie Minnick. "We have held out for a contract that would give us all of these. We have bargained starting pay that increases by approximately 50 percent over the next three years, and raises for current paras that are far more than what they would have received in normal negotiations."

. . . **members of the Florida Education Association,** who have persuaded legislators to shelve a bill mandating that school districts "review" food service, transportation, and maintenance/operations services; request proposals from private firms; and complete written analyses comparing the private bids to current in-house costs.

Bill HB 217, FEA members pointed out, created unfunded mandates and falsely assumed that current support services are fully funded. Moreover, this legislation did not require review of currently privatized services, consider the hidden costs of privatization, or provide for transparency in contractor cost accounting and decision making.

Privatization: *Look* before legislating!

William L. Brown

Should teachers have students correct each other's papers?

The Supreme Court recently ruled that teachers don't break the law when they have students correct each other's papers. NEA, which filed a motion supporting the ruling, has taken no position on whether this grading process is good practice. But here, our members have.

yes

Yes! This is a natural part of the learning process, which I recommend to increase student achievement.

Here's why: Teachers are urged to focus on "higher order thinking skills." Being involved in evaluation helps students synthesize and take ownership of their learning. When my students correct papers, their faces light up, and I hear whispered cheers of "yesssss!" They are mentally confirming their own learning as we go over the work.

Students benefit from immediate, specific feedback. They cannot get it if the teacher must correct all the papers, all the time. I would not ask students to mark tests, but correcting each other's classwork or homework is fine.

Sometimes I have students correct their own papers, but I often find this takes too long because students are so focused on reviewing their errors. Instead, I have them mark each other's papers, circling wrong answers. Then, they return the papers and I give them time to fix mistakes.

Does this practice embarrass those who don't do well? It doesn't have to. Learning is all about taking chances. You learn from your mistakes. Students take risks every time they ask a question in front of the class or offer an answer. Kids are keen. They know who is at the top and who isn't, whether they see each other's mistakes on paper or not.

In my class, we openly admit that we all have weaknesses. My students know I am a terrible speller and often correct my work! I ask them how to spell words, I flagrantly use the dictionary, and I teach them about my best friend—Spell Check! We help each other over the hurdles and celebrate each other's successes. The class is a team, and I am just one of many cheerleaders. Constructive criticism is allowed, ridicule and teasing are not. It doesn't matter if you have 1 wrong or 20 wrong on your homework because we are all there striving to reach our goals. We know success is possible, progress will be made, and all the small steps along the way are just as important as crossing the finish line! ✔

JANINE RIGGINS currently teaches the third grade at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where she has taught for 13 years. She was published recently in *Memorable Moments from the Classroom* (The MASTER Teacher Inc.).

no

Some kids, no matter how hard they try, will usually be on the bottom looking up. Keeping the student's work as private as possible will not cure this problem, but it will help immensely. Every time a low score is made public in a classroom, another hole is shot through that all-important area of self-worth.

This is not a one-time event. For kids with marginal abilities, these situations occur over and over, sometimes daily. Should we be surprised that some kids hate school and quit? These kids aren't falling through the cracks, they're shoved.

I practiced this form of correcting papers until the effects became obvious. At the extreme, I saw more than one student turn their pencil into a weapon and attack their failed paper with hard scribbles until either the pencil point broke or the paper ripped. Right or wrong, the students view the quality of their schoolwork as a measure of their worth.

I've often heard the argument, "Well, the kids all know where one another stands anyhow, so what's the big deal?" The big deal is that the mark on the paper makes it more official. Their status moves from being an opinion into the "fact" category. The problem is multiplied when it is made public.

As for the idea that exchanging papers and correcting serves as a good, immediate review, I agree. And it's also true that good teachers try to teach respect in situations like this. When the teacher is no longer on the scene, however, it's another story. Recess and after school are "open season" for kids intent on teasing or getting even with someone. Have we forgotten how cruel kids can be to one another?

Kids correcting kids' work is not only a thoughtless practice, it is not necessary. It is far more effective to have kids correct their own work.

Papers used for important evaluations should be corrected by teachers anyway. Teachers must make the final judgment as to whether the time they save is worth eroding the self-concept of those students who are always looking up. ✔

HARVEY ERIKSON taught for 36 years in Illinois and Michigan, mostly teaching fifth and sixth grade in Moline, Illinois. For three years, he taught special education at the junior high school level. He is now retired, but still subs in Pleasant Valley, Iowa.

What's Your Opinion?

Should teachers have students correct each other's papers?
To vote, visit our website at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

"Never smile until Thanksgiving"—Is that a good policy? The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*
36% Yes **64% No**

Do you serve the kids better when you live in the community? If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

Reach for the Stars

NEA member Barbara Morgan prepares to travel into space.

As NASA's first educator mission specialist, Barbara Morgan will take students on a new journey of learning. Morgan, a former elementary school teacher from Boise, Idaho, first gained recognition in 1985 as the backup for the pioneering Teacher in Space Christa McAuliffe. After the Challenger *explosion in January 1986, Morgan continued to work with NASA and entered the astronaut training program full time in 1998.*

Since then, she has trained at Johnson Space Center in Houston. Morgan will travel into space in 2004. She spoke with NEA Today's *Kristen Loschert about her upcoming flight and the role educators can play in the space program.*

Why did you enter the astronaut training program?
Because the opportunity was there. I'm a teacher and teachers always look for opportunities to bring the world to the classroom and opportunities that will enrich our classrooms and the classrooms of those around us.

After the *Challenger* accident, NASA asked if I would continue on and fly at some point for education. It took some time, but in 1998 that's what happened.

Why is it important to have an educator on the shuttle team?
It's important now just as it was when the Teacher in Space flew. Teachers are explorers, and a space flight is a natural thing for a teacher to do. Teachers explore with their students every day and instill curiosity as much as knowledge.

I personally hope that what actually happens is young people will pay attention to teachers across the country and want to become teachers, just as Christa had hoped.

What will your duties include?
First and foremost my job is to be a good crew member. We all get trained to the same level as mission specialists and we have a variety of roles, including flight engineer, running and monitoring all the equipment and systems onboard, robotics, space walking, and doing the science onboard.

There's also education. There are education activities going on right now, and it will continue to be a core focus.

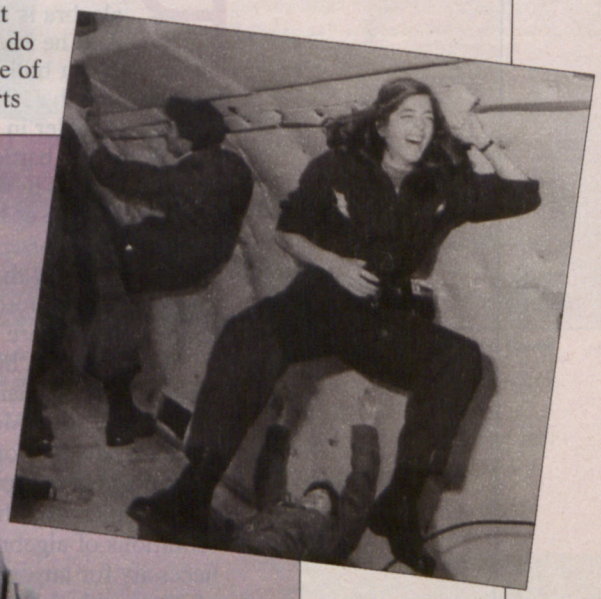
How did your experiences as a teacher prepare you to become an astronaut?
First of all, teachers are in the business of learning. It's what they do day in and day out, every day.

You're used to working hard and working with lots of different individuals in different challenges and environments. All of that prepares you well for working in space.

Do you miss teaching?
Very much. I really miss the students. I miss the calling.

What are your plans after the mission?
I hope to fly a couple more times, then I want to go back to the classroom.

Will you help train future teachers who enter the space program?
It's funny you should ask that because we all do that. That's one of the neatest parts of the training—everybody pitches in and helps train each other.



Photos courtesy of NASA

Barbara Morgan provides communications support between NASA's Mission Control and the crew aboard the International Space Station.

When we first started, they put each of us new folks in an office with a very experienced astronaut. It was so great. We were learning the basics and everybody was so willing to share and give tips and answer our questions.

I can't wait for the new teachers to come along and help out, and I think everyone else in the astronaut office feels the same.

What would you say to a young aspiring astronaut?
Go for it. I'd say the same thing for kids who want to be teachers. It's a wonderful thing to get to learn every day. Kids just need to continue working hard and find the things they love.

Math and science are important, but so are reading and writing, literature, and the arts. Whether as an astronaut or a teacher, we try to prepare kids by giving them skills and by working with them so they can see the possibilities. The better prepared you are, the more opportunities you have to keep that door to the future wide open.

What advice would you give to beginning teachers?
I would tell them they have chosen a great profession. It's the best profession in the world and it's the hardest.

I often think that no matter how hard the astronaut training gets it will never be harder than teaching.

What do you think it will be like to return to the classroom?
It's going to be a challenge. I know a lot of teaching is practice, practice, practice. I know things change in education, so I'm looking forward to taking the classes to get back into practice.

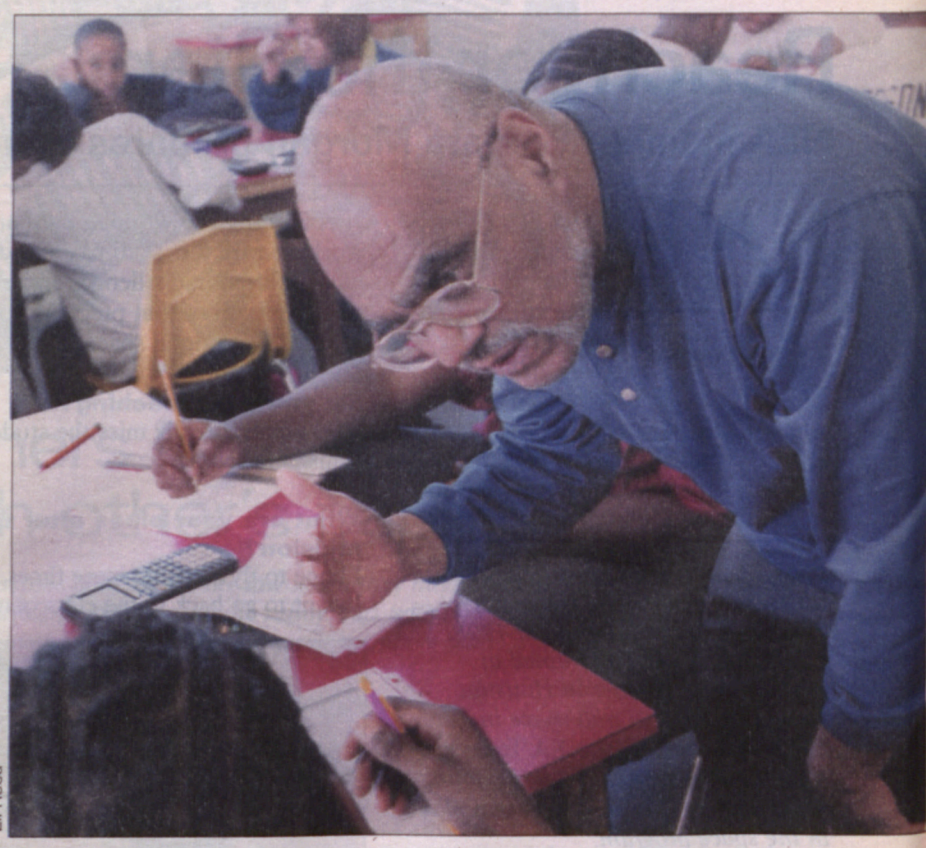
It sounds a lot like a new teacher mentor program.
It is. It's also like the collaborative teaching we do in the classroom.

My favorite years in school were those spent as a third-grade teacher. We all worked together closely and took turns going into each other's room. We were constantly learning from each other.

To me, those were the most rewarding years in the classroom, going to the more experienced people, but also drawing from my immediate colleagues. ✔

Successful Equation

A civil rights activist gives students a leg up in the Information Age.



Eli Reed

Bob Moses believes teaching algebra to disadvantaged students will smooth their way in the technological age and help secure their futures.

Bob Moses thinks an education in algebra is a matter of civil rights. And he knows more than a little about both subjects. A math teacher since the 1950s, Moses was also a civil rights leader in the 1960s and fought hard in the the battle to end literacy tests for Black voters in the south.

In 1982, Moses founded The Algebra Project, headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with the goal of finding ways to expose more kids to advanced mathematics before high school.

"In the 1960s, literacy was put on the table as a prerequisite for the full rights of citizenship," says Moses. Today, he says, there's a new face on the same old problem. "The information age of computers and networks has put advanced mathematics—math with the symbolic, abstract representations of algebra—on the table as an educational necessity for anyone who strives to enjoy the full rights of citizenship," he says. Yet millions of kids, especially minorities, aren't getting that education and are destined to lose out, he adds. "They won't be able to access the economy at the level necessary to support families."

Through The Algebra Project, Moses has worked with middle schools to develop creative, game-centered mathematics curricula that expose students to abstract mathematics and prepare them for high school algebra. Moses himself introduced such a curriculum in Jackson, Mississippi, where he experimented with a variety of teaching techniques at Brinkley Middle School, then followed his students on to Lanier High School, where Moses still teaches.

"I was extremely pleased with the results," he says. Research studies that have tracked Algebra Project students confirm the benefits: Most go on to take advanced math classes in high school, and at a higher rate than their peers. To further this work, the National Science Foundation has awarded The Algebra Project a grant to create two new programs for high school freshmen.

"We need to keep expanding," says Moses. "It's not sufficient that a few students in each school will always excel in math. We need to build a floor, not a ceiling."

For more: E-mail Ben Moynihan at The Algebra Project at ben@algebra.org.

Dallas Morning News/Ariane Kadoch

The National Student/Parent Mock Election gives students a chance to discuss the issues and the candidates before "voting."

Power to the People

Mock election teaches the value of the vote.

How do you get students excited about the electoral process when most can't even vote?

It's not easy—which is why signing up for the National Student/Parent Mock Election on November 1 may not be a bad idea.

For 22 years this exercise in civic activism has thrilled American kids and their parents—and for good reason. With a simple click of a button, they get a chance to "vote" for their local governors, senators, representatives, and whichever issues are important to their communities. The nonprofit, nonpartisan Mock Election program provides grade-based curriculum materials on current issues and candidate profiles, so teachers and parents have talking points for lively discussions before and after the vote.

This year the Mock Election is partnering with America Online (AOL) to expand the online educational services offered through the program. Now votes can be cast through special links from AOL@SCHOOL, a free educational resource website for kids and teachers, and votes will be tallied online. Participants will also get free materials through the AOL Government Guide website.

"We're hoping to turn around the sense of powerlessness that keeps people from the polls," says Gloria Kirshner, Mock Election president.

—Leah Lakins

For more: Register online before or on November 1 at http://school.aol.com, www.governmentguide.com, and www.nationalmockelection.com.

A Flair For Physics

What happens when science gets crazy?

When Valdine McLean first joined the science faculty at Pershing County High School in Lovelock, Nevada, only 10 percent of the seniors took physics. That was in 1993. Since then, thanks to McLean's unique methods of instruction, enrollment in senior physics has climbed to 50 percent.

What's her secret?

"Fun," says McLean. "When I was a student, that was my own learning style: If there wasn't something fun about it, I wasn't interested."

McLean has made physics fun by encouraging students to put scientific concepts into practice in innovative, colorful, and sometimes comical ways. For example, students build Rube Goldberg devices, with the goal of connecting 10 complicated machines together to accomplish an extremely simple task. They also construct and race toy cars that must be powered by a mouse trap.

By far the most original and popular part of McLean's physics curriculum is the annual Halloween pumpkin catapult contest. Each year, students pair up with adults from participating charity organizations to see who can build a catapult that will hurl a pumpkin the farthest.

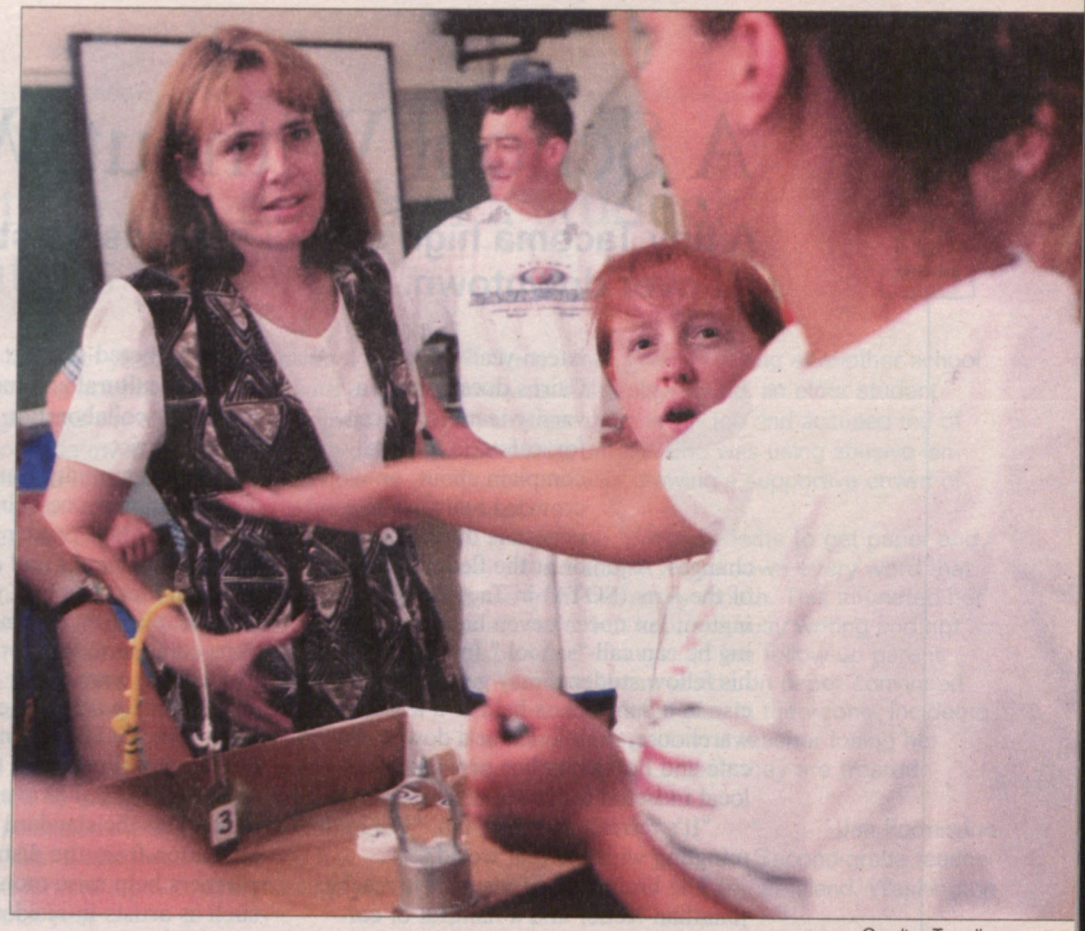
"The pumpkin contest is more than fun—it's competitive," says McLean, "So students have an extra incentive to master the physical principles they have learned."

McLean started the contest to help raise money for the annual senior physics trip to museums and other sites of scientific interest. "The teams building the catapults get friends to pledge money," says McLean. "It's now become so popular that it pays for the entire trip, including room and board." Last year, two teams tied by launching pumpkins 105 yards on the school football field.

Aside from the fun, McLean is producing impressive academic results. The average ACT science scores of students who have taken her class have risen every year she has been at Pershing. And a broader range of students are signing up for physics. "I have gender diversity, cultural diversity, diversity of economic backgrounds, and even diversity of grade point average," says McLean. "Some *C* and *D* students take physics. They're curious about it."

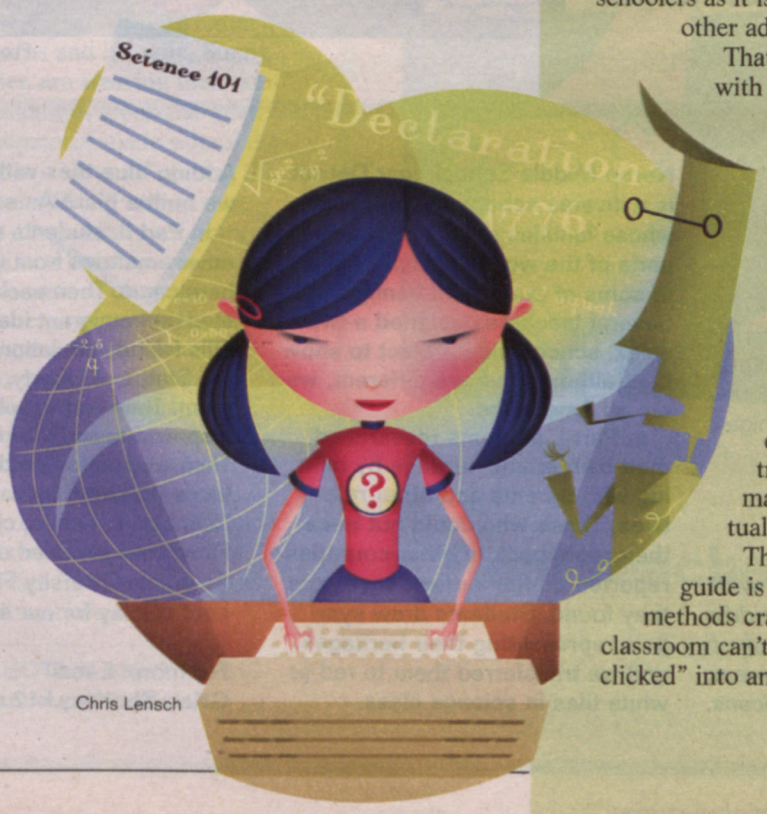
For her work in pumpkin propulsion and other innovative efforts in physics teaching, McLean won The NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence in 2001.

For more: E-mail McLean at vmclean@fox.lovelock.nv.us. Apply for a grant today from The NEA Foundation by visiting www.nfie.org.



Candice Towell

Valdine McLean's offbeat methods make learning physics fun—and test scores suggest her creative approach is making a difference.



Chris Lensch

High School Virtual-osity

A new guide helps sort through the electronic course heap.

Not too long ago an online high school course was about as rare as a second grader who didn't want recess. Now the virtual class is everywhere, and the number of high schoolers signing up is in the thousands—and multiplying.

A good thing? It depends. Turns out that buying into the world of electronic education can be as tricky for high schoolers as it is for collegians and other adults.

That's why NEA teamed up with several partners, including the Virtual High School Project and the National Association of State Boards of Education, to publish *The Guide to Online High School Courses*. It's an easy-to-follow handbook designed to help students, parents, teachers, and school administrators understand what makes a high-quality virtual classroom experience.

The idea behind the guide is simple: Standards and methods crafted for the regular classroom can't simply be "double-clicked" into an online environment.

"We need to be realistic about what the expectations are for these courses," says Barbara Stein, an NEA senior policy analyst who worked on the guide. Yes, the benefits can be great, she notes. The subject offerings are vast. The classes provide unique access for students with special needs. They're convenient and save time. And they give teachers seeking personal and professional development an opportunity to learn an alternative method of instruction.

But, Stein warns, the classes aren't for everyone. Students who sign up, for example, must be self-motivated, disciplined, organized, and proficient in writing and communicating. And so parents need to be poised to provide that "reality check." Teachers of online classes, meanwhile, must be ready to commit to continual interactions with their students. Administrators must make sure the courses are sound. And policymakers must grapple intelligently with issues of funding, state and local goals, and instructor licenses. The guide, says Stein, pays attention to all these issues.

—Lauren Fischer

For more: Get the guide online at www.nea.org/technology/distanceed/highschool/.

A School Without Walls

A tiny Tacoma high school spreads its students all over downtown.

Sixteen-year-old Ian Cairns doesn't have a varsity team to try out for, cafeteria food to complain about, or crowded hallways to negotiate during class changes. A junior at the fledgling School of the Arts (SOTA) in Tacoma, Washington, Ian doesn't even have one building he can call "school." Instead, he and his fellow students may get their exercise in a dance class held in a leased warehouse, grab lunch at a downtown café and hop a city bus or walk to a local museum for history class.

"It's refreshing," says Ian. "I'm intermingling with the real world."

The brainchild of visual arts teacher Jonathan Ketler and a handful of colleagues, SOTA opened last fall with 160 10th graders. By the 2003-04 school year, Ketler, who is also the school's community partnership coordinator, expects SOTA to top out at 350 students in grades 10-12.

The intent is to integrate the arts with academics and, in doing so, make students a part of the community. "We built our program based on what our community had as its resources," says Ketler. Students use museums, a performing arts center, the local campus of the University of Washington, and warehouses as classrooms. Local architects have even involved them in planning a new motorcycle museum.

"These are facilities the community has invested in," says Ketler, who worked as a potter and in the home-building business before becoming an educator eight years ago. "Most of them are under-utilized during the day."

Before taking the proposal to administrators at the Tacoma Public Schools, Ketler garnered support for SOTA from the city's cultural community. The grassroots collaboration won over the school district.

"The community wants to be part of the education process, but often feels it can't," he says. "Students are trapped by the school walls and can't get to the opportunities. The best you can do is have people from community institutions come in to talk for an hour. Instead, we wanted our kids to go out."

A start-up summer effort soon blossomed into SOTA when the Gates Foundation jumped on the idea and promised $450,000 over three years. SOTA gets the standard per pupil budget allocation from the district. Community partners help raise money for extras such as artists-in-residence. The Tacoma Education Association supports the project, which features teachers working with arts professionals in some classes, as well as a longer school day balanced by a shortened year.

English teacher Steve Cairns (also Ian's dad) says SOTA's first year was the hardest of his 24 years in education. There's no principal—the faculty runs the school. "Sometimes we were dashing from one emergency to the next," he says. This fall, a dean of students will tackle some of the daily travails.

Despite its name, SOTA doesn't only attract just fine arts superstars. "These are kids who find all of life interesting," says Cairns. Some simply enjoy SOTA's approach of integrating the arts into core subjects. The 220 students who applied for 120 spots in this fall's 10th grade didn't audition or submit transcripts. Portfolios and interviews were key. "We're looking at motivation and desire to participate in the community," says Ketler.

About a quarter of the student body

School of the Arts students take classes at institutions like the state history museum (above). Teacher Jonathan Ketler and his students work in a converted warehouse (below).

Photos by Ellen Banner

How I Did It

Gail Katz
ESL teacher
Oak Park, Michigan

A two-week, school-wide project taught our middle school students that even though we are different, we are all Americans.

Norup Middle School near Detroit is a diverse school with students whose families came from many parts of the world. I teach English to some of our recent immigrants. Several teachers designed a two-week, school-wide project to show that, although we are different, we are all Americans.

In Part I, students researched their own ethnic heritage by talking with parents and other relatives. Those who could not trace their roots back to other countries reported on the earliest ancestors they found. Students drew symbols representing their heritages, and we transferred them to red or white tiles in science class. Adding blue tiles with white stars, we built a giant American flag.

In Part II, students researched other countries from which people here came. Then each student created an immigrant identity for an Ellis Island simulation. Dressed as the Statue of Liberty, I greeted them. They had to submit to health inspections and interrogations. Then we feasted on donated ethnic foods, followed by patriotic music from our orchestra, choir, and band. Finally, we revealed our huge American Diversity Flag, a permanent display for our school.

For more: E-mail GKatz@berkley.k12.mi.us.

is non-white, he adds. Though "a fair reflection" of the community, Ketler is striving for greater ethnic and economic diversity. "The more diverse, the better the school." Attracting boys is difficult, says Ian, attributing that to the lack of team sports.

During its first year, SOTA averaged 98 percent attendance for students and 99.5 for staff. "We know everyone," says Ketler, "If you're not there one day you're missed." Students start their days in various locations but come together in groups of about 10 for a daily half hour to meet with an adult mentor. The whole school meets weekly.

Discipline problems are rare. "We're teenagers and we have the chance to be out on the streets and be mature about it,"says Ian, "Some kids blow it but most don't."

SOTA's focus on the arts doesn't detract from the standard academics, Ketler notes. The budding musicians may be staging impromptu concerts on city streets, but they're also taking math and science on a college campus.

The faculty is working toward "competency-based education," where students move forward based on skill, not just the amount of time logged in a classroom. "We'll integrate concepts so kids learn how skills transfer from one discipline to another, how artistic inquiry is the same as scientific inquiry," says Ketler. Cairns and his wife, Sunny, a history teacher, are weaving their subjects into a humanities block this year.

SOTA's uniqueness made school district officials "very nervous" during the first year, Cairns adds. "Parents were our best allies—even when our warehouse looked like a bombed-out air raid shelter. We were apologetic, but they said, 'You're giving our kids their best shot. They're loving it here.'"

Parents also log lots of volunteer hours. With students coming from Tacoma and several surrounding districts, many drive their children to school.

"People are starting to shop at stores, coming downtown on weekends to see exhibits their kids have talked about" says Ketler. "We're bringing a whole region downtown." ✔

For more: call SOTA at 253/377-4010 or visit www.tacoma.k12.wa.us/.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do when a student threatens you?

A couple of years ago, I received a call from a neighbor who had heard a group of my students in the street outside my house arguing. One girl with a history of behavioral problems had threatened to damage my property because of some imagined slight.

I had not had her in any class, so it was all in her imagination. I called the police, who recognized the name immediately and advised me to take out a "No Trespass" order against her. I did, but reluctantly, because I was going to have her in my reading class. I told my principal and school psychologist.

The girl's mother came in to talk, and I assured her I had no grudges against her daughter. The mother promised me the situation would go no further. It didn't, and I was one of the few teachers who formed a positive relationship with the student that year.

Sharon Anderson
Middle school special needs teacher
Bridgewater, Massachusetts

■ Student aggression can usually be prevented. Interventions should be put in place before a crisis develops!

1. Make the classroom friendly and non-threatening—for some kids, school is the most secure place they know.

2. Know your students. Be aware of changes in normal behavior. Talk to them every day and get to know what's going on in their lives.

3. Speak in a quiet voice with respect. You get what you give.

4. Confrontation breeds confrontation—never lose control! If necessary, ask for help and leave the situation until you regain composure.

5. If your personal safety is in danger, get immediate assistance. Often a third person can defuse the situation.

Betsy Middleton
High school behavior analyst
Kissimmee, Florida

■ Once, when I was teaching at another school and was in the playground, an older student threatened me and my job and accused me of something untrue. She was using abusive language and was drawing a supportive crowd of her peers.

I sent one of my students to get paper and pencil and calmly wrote down every word that came from her angry mouth. This infuriated her even more, but kept me busy writing and not responding in anger. In the follow-up parent conference, those words on paper convinced the parent her child was in the wrong. Incidents like these can result in a teacher losing her credibility and job unless they are treated carefully.

Jan Formisano
Second-grade teacher
Mercer Island, Washington

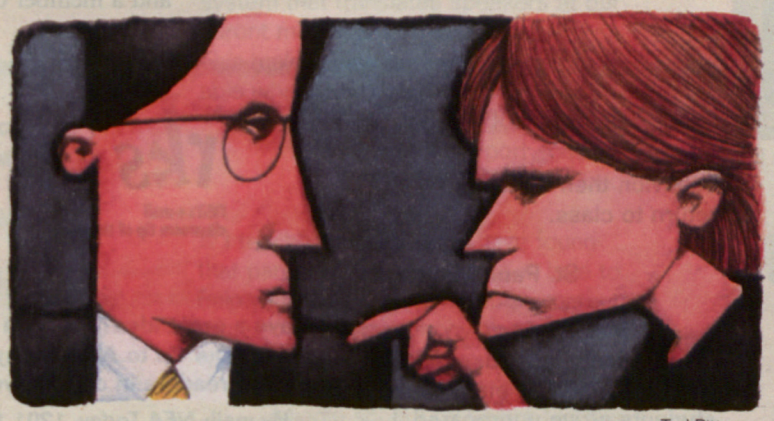
■ I had a sixth-grade student go ballistic. He threw chairs and picked one up to throw at me. I maintained eye contact. I didn't say, "Put it down" or "Don't throw it." I said, "Think carefully, I understand that you are angry and hurt." I kept talking calmly until he put it down. I have been hurt three times in classrooms. You learn to speak quietly and calmly.

Kathleen Daugherty
Middle school special education teacher
Las Vegas, Nevada

■ I have a third-grade student with a lot of problems. She is taller than I am and very streetwise. Whenever she loses it, she ends up threatening me. I look her right in the eye, call her by name, and say, "What can I do to help? I am on your side." This calms her down. I tell her I love and respect her, and I expect her to treat me with the same respect. I remind her I would never threaten or hurt her, and I don't want her to treat me that way.

I have been lucky so far. In this particular case, she simply needs reassurance and love.

Mandy DeBrabander
Third-grade teacher
Lansing, Michigan



Ted Pitts

Got an Answer?

How do you keep lesson plans from getting stale?
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"Real teachers. . . touch tomorrow."

—Gayle Johnson, retired high school physical education teacher, St. George, Utah

Photos by Robert Chase

NEA Student Program member Todd Owens, father of two and a senior at Wayne State University, knows good teachers need to build a rapport with parents.

Meet the Parents

And make them part of your education team.

You've survived the first six weeks of school and you are beginning to understand your students. But just as you get comfortable in your classroom, you realize it's time to meet the parents.

For a new teacher, the thought of meeting students' parents can be more terrifying than meeting the parents of your future spouse. But keep in mind, parents often are just as nervous about meeting you.

"Some parents come to school scared because their own experiences in school weren't positive, so teachers need to be sensitive to that" says Dorothy Rich, founder and president of the Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C. Rich has more than 30 years of experience designing programs to help teachers and families work together.

Through Rich's MegaSkills® program, school staff and parents learn ways to collaborate to help students succeed academically. The program shows teachers how to build positive relationships with their students' families, with a focus on helping students build the behaviors, attitudes, and habits that determine school success, like confidence, motivation, responsibility, and initiative. About 39 states offer the program through a MegaSkills/NEA initiative.

"One of the issues that new teachers, and teachers in general, face is building a sense of welcome at their schools and into their classrooms," says Debra Nixon, director of the Center for Revitalization of Urban Education at the Michigan Education Association. "What MegaSkills equips teachers with is a practical tool for enhancing that welcome."

During 60- to 90-minute workshops, teachers learn how to build parent-school connections. They also become more comfortable with one-on-one and large group interactions. The program includes 11 different sessions.

Todd Owens, a senior at Wayne State University in Detroit and a member of the NEA Student Program, found the MegaSkills training especially helpful when he wanted to learn how to build a rapport with the parents of his future students.

"I want to teach older kids, so I wanted to know what it was like to work with the parents of older kids," says Owens, a second-career teacher who has a daughter in elementary school and one preschool-aged daughter. "I know that inviting parents into my classroom is going to be a must."

By inviting parents to school, teachers can dispel any misconceptions parents have about what happens during the school day, Owens says. But, speaking as a parent, Owens encourages his fellow teachers to visit parents as well, since many parents cannot get away from work to attend school events or conferences.

Discipline Cards

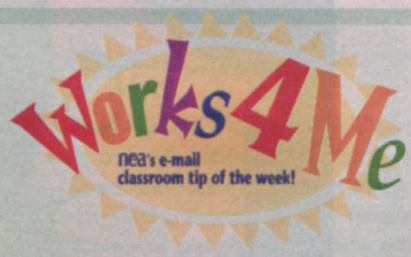
I have green, yellow, and red discipline cards on a chart for each student. At the start of the day, each student has a green card on the chart. If a child disrupts class, the student removes his or her green card as a warning. If the child is disruptive a second time, the student removes the yellow card and receives a five-minute time out. After the third offense, the child removes the red card and receives a 10-minute time out. If the behavior continues, the child talks to the educational assistant about his or her behavior, then the child may return to class.

Lolita Cox
St. Paul, Minnesota

Pencil Predicament

Our students must use pencils in math class, but many times students arrive unprepared. I used to keep a supply of pencils with erasers available for student use, but students did not always return them after class. So I purchased a box of short golf pencils. Now I give them freely to students in need.

James Joseph Adams
Virginia Beach, Virginia



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- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

Dorothy Rich agrees that teachers must remember the needs of parents and acknowledge that parents are part of the education team.

"You say, 'Welcome to my classroom. I know and I believe that you are very important in the educational achievement of your child, and I will work with you so I know all the best things to help this child achieve,'" Rich says. "You keep on repeating words of reassurance and you show through your actions that you value parents."

Rich suggests teachers call parents at the beginning of the year to introduce themselves. Parent-teacher conferences should include practical strategies parents can use to help their children at home, she says. If teachers plan to use parent volunteers in their classrooms, they should know what duties the volunteers will perform. The teacher may want to confer with the volunteer ahead of time to determine what the volunteer would be comfortable doing, she adds.

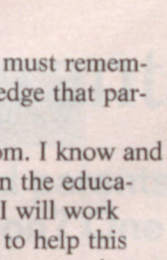
While most parents look forward to working with their child's teacher, some resist a teacher's efforts. In those instances, teachers need to accept that they may not reach all parents.

"Keep your smile and keep going forward with your outreach," Rich says. "A new teacher must know he or she is the education leader. You are providing the leadership, even if you are 22 years old and scared to death." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

For more information about the MegaSkills® program, go to www.megaskillshsi.org/Default.htm. *MegaSkills Moments for Teachers*, available for $9.95 from the NEA Professional Library, offers vignettes and questions designed to turn everyday problems into opportunities for personal and professional growth. Visit http://home.nea.org/books.

RESOURCES



Bright Ideas

The NEA Professional Library has released a revised edition of *Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers*. This handy checklist book, which costs $4.50 for NEA members, includes tips for communicating with parents, navigating parent-teacher conferences, working with a mentor, managing your classroom, and managing stress. To order a copy or for more information, go to http://home.nea.org/books/.

National PTA

To learn more about working with parents, check out the website for the national PTA at www.pta.org/index.asp. It includes general information about the organization, tips for ways parents can work with schools, advice for helping children succeed in school, health and safety facts, and education news. You also can subscribe to *Our Children*, the national PTA magazine, at the website.

The First-Year Teacher

For a book to guide you through your first year, check out *The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)*. This book, available for $16.95 from the NEA Professional Library, includes scripts for parent-teacher conferences, time-saving strategies for dealing with paperwork, solutions to common discipline problems, and activities to acclimate elementary and middle school students to a new classroom. To order a copy or for more information, go to http://home.nea.org/books/.

Nobody Ever Told Me

With a Little Help From My Friends

I realized early on as a new teacher the importance of having a supportive network of colleagues.

On my first day of teaching, numerous colleagues introduced themselves and introduced me to my new profession. It was comforting to a jittery new teacher who previously felt all alone.

Then, after only two months in my position, my father developed a fatal illness. My colleagues were wonderfully supportive, both professionally and emotionally. Sadly, my father passed away the day before Christmas vacation. My colleagues, who had known me for only a short period of time, took care of my

classroom, copying papers and devising substitute plans. Without their support, I could not have gotten through the ordeal of losing my father within the first few months of starting my first teaching position.

The social aspects of teaching are sometimes neglected or viewed as trivial. But social support often is the most important need new teachers have.

Robert W. Dill
Middle school social studies teacher
Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Got a Story?

E-mail kloschert@nea.org.

[DILEMMA]

How do you get parents involved at your school?

I created 20 "connection bags" that focus on the standards I teach in class. Each bag contains games, hands-on activities, and at least two books related to the theme of a lesson. The students take a bag home for the week and get the family involved in what they are learning. I also have family nights where the parents learn how to use the tools.

Kristin Rubow
Third-grade teacher
Menlo Park, California

■ I work at a school with a diverse population. To overcome the language barrier some of our parents face, we use a system that translates speakers at our parent meetings into three languages. This makes the parents more comfortable when they come to school.

John Toscano
Behavior support specialist
Pompano Beach, Florida

■ I teach orchestra and I have found that parents who are musicians love to help with the program. I contact parents involved in the symphony and ask them to mentor my string players.

Linda Monahan
Middle school orchestra teacher
Longview, Washington

■ During our school open house, parents learn about my class' daily tasks, attendance, and grading policies. I also inform them about a website I created that includes daily updates, activities in my classroom, study guides, website links, and weekly notices. Students and parents also can contact me by e-mail.

Victor Garcia
High school Spanish teacher
New Bern, North Carolina

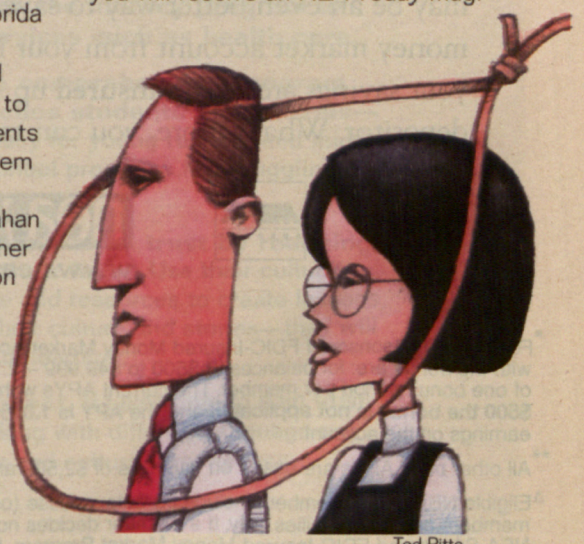
■ At the fall open house, teachers encourage parents to help on the yearly book fair and spring play or to volunteer in the library or as chaperones for trips.

Linda James
Middle school teacher
Framingham, Massachusetts

Got an Answer?

What do you do when you think student work is parent work?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!



Ted Pitts

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MMNT1002

Giving Migrants the Gift of Literacy

When the students and parents are migrants, how can you make every season a reading season? One Florida member shows the way.

It's 9:30 a.m. at Denee's Trailer Park in Apopka, Florida, and while many migrant parents are working in local fields, fisheries, or nurseries, others are huddled in the trailer-turned-classroom where NEA member Sonia Mariani-Hendrickson is about to start a lesson on literacy. For the next two hours, the parents and young children will play together, talk together, and most important, read together.

Mariani-Hendrickson is on a mission to help parent and child gain the basic skills needed for a lifetime of pleasure with words. "We know that when parents are able to read to their children, play word games, and sing songs, it's another step toward literacy," says Mariani-Hendrickson, coordinator of the Title I Early Intervention Outreach and MigrantRead Program for Orange County, Florida. "This is particularly key when you have migrant parents, because they play such a key role in their child's education."

The Florida program is based on the MotherRead and FatherRead Program in Raleigh, North Carolina, where instructors use children's books, nursery rhymes and stories, and the parents' life experiences to help teach. "Because most of our migrants come from Mexico," says Mariani-Hendrickson, "we help them develop reading skills in Spanish first, then move to bilingual books, and finally to English books. It's a gradual process, but very effective."

The tutors also show by example, demonstrating the skills of wordplay and songs, and of reading with children. "The first thing you need to do is assess the parent's own level of literacy and cultural knowledge of things like native nursery rhymes," says Mariani-Hendrickson, who made a point of learning those rhymes herself. Then she showed the parents how to use them to teach their children. "Slowly, they acquire the language and the skills," she adds.

The process appears to be working. Mariani-Hendrickson, who has run the program for two years, says an average of a dozen parents and 10 children participate in the weekly sessions—impressive, given the transient nature of the population. Some, for example, are around only during one agricultural season, but Mariani-Hendrickson and her staff pound the pavement, aggressively luring them to the program by selling not just literacy, but other perks, too.

"We offer support services, such as health screening, additional tutoring, and access to community services," says Mariani-Hendrickson. "The migrants now see the benefits of our outreach effort."

And the children? Mariani-Hendrickson counts the successes one child at a time. One five-year-old boy recently answered all of her questions and reading cues—encouraging progress. He then modeled the reading skills for his younger siblings, a sure sign that the learning will extend throughout the family.

Students at the middle school and high school benefit from the program, too. So-called "advocates" meet with them for after-school tutoring, counseling, and mentoring, and also offer a special leadership program and transportation home. "These advocates are now sought out by the parents, as well," says Mariani-Hendrickson. "They now feel they have an ally in the school system in this program." That's rewarding, she says.

"It just shows you that when it comes to reading and achievement," Mariani-Hendrickson says, "even the most transitory of students—the migrant student—won't be left behind." ✔

—Anita Merina

Chris Livingston

Mirna Camacho tutors migrant children in a literacy program run by NEA member Sonia Mariani-Hendrickson.

You Can Do It, Too!

How can you help migrant students in your area? Here are some tips to help you get going:

Find the migrants and their families where they work and gather. Let them know your program is available to them. Getting the word out is key.

Try to link the literacy program to other services such as health care.

Create a comprehensive program that reaches students at all levels—early literacy for young readers and middle or high school programs for struggling older readers.

Gain the migrants' trust by reaching them at their level. Use their cultural knowledge and resources to create lessons. Respect their culture and stories—they will be a plus to learning.

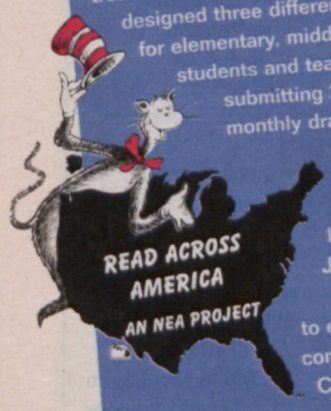
Be persistent. It takes time to gain trust while working with different language and skill levels and cultural experiences.

Read Across America All Year Long

Hunt for Treasure with NEA's Read Across America.

Lead your students to the Read Across America Website and start your hunt for treasure! Read Across partner CyberSurfari has designed three different treasure hunts—one for elementary, middle, and high school students and teachers. Treasure hunters submitting 20 clues will enter a monthly drawing for three $25 gift certificates. Go to www.nea.org/readacross. The contest lasts from November to June, 2003.

There's also still time to enter the Back to School contest on the RAA Website. Contest ends October 30.



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Wired

Protecting E-mail Privacy

Dear Web Editor,

Is employee e-mail and other personal information on a school district's network protected from search or review by the district?

Don Mack
Technology teacher
Laramie, Wyoming

Increasingly, we spend more and more time communicating with our colleagues and friends and planning our lives while at work, using e-mail and other digital network services provided by our employers. We generally use these tools as if they were private and secure. What you need to know is that e-mail can be retrieved, online chat and other messaging tools can be recorded, and keystrokes can be logged.

But to what extent does your employer have the right to monitor your communications, and do you have any privacy rights? The short answer is, it all depends on your school district's policy on network usage, often referred to as an "Acceptable Use Policy" or "AUP." Most AUPs contain provisions that allow employers to monitor e-mail and other digital communications. Many AUPs also explicitly state that users don't have any privacy rights in their communications.

Potential liability is one of the leading reasons employers seek to monitor employee communications. This is a legitimate concern, especially in districts that permit employees' personal use of district-provided electronic tools.

E-mail messages, including deleted e-mail, are discoverable in a lawsuit. Because employers are exposed to liability in many ways, districts often believe they have little choice but to monitor school employees' use of district-provided electronic tools.

The Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA), a 1986 amendment to the Federal Wiretap Act, broadly prohibits intentional interception of electronic communications, including e-mail. But the ECPA has so many exceptions that it offers employees little protection from employer monitoring.

For example, under the exceptions in the statute, network providers—including employers—can intercept electronic communications to ensure the proper functinoing of the system, to protect the provider's rights or property, or with prior consent from a user. Consequently, the ECPA isn't a substantial obstacle to employers who want to monitor their own networks.

Given these loopholes, some local Associations have attempted to bargain privacy protections for employees into their collective bargaining agreements or, in nonbargaining states, into the AUP. To date, these efforts have produced mixed results.

In the end, the best advice is if you want something to be private, don't use your employer's network. Period.

Quick Tip

Tired of finding your e-mail account clogged with spam—those annoying unsolicited e-mails you get from people or businesses? One way to protect yourself from electronic junk mail is to add a few extra characters to your e-mail address whenever you visit a website that asks for it.

For example, if your e-mail address is john@doe.com, tell a newsgroup that your address is john@REMOVE.doe.com. A list administrator may notice that your e-mail address is incorrect, but an automated e-mail address collector will never know.

Got a Question?

Ask the Web editor at webeditor@list.nea.org. Or send your questions by regular mail to *NEA Today* or by fax to 202/822-7206.

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail it (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a website, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

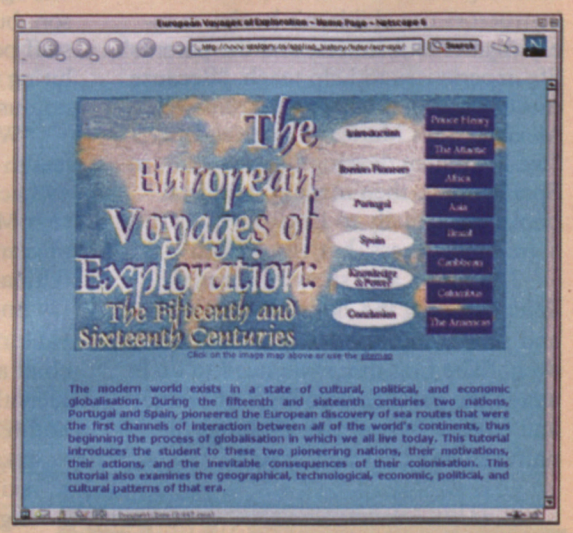
Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today* or by fax to 202/822-7206.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Editor's Pick

European Voyages of Exploration

During the 15th and 16th centuries, seafaring countries of Europe expanded their influence in the world through exploration—Portugal and Spain led the way. A University of Calgary tutorial introduces students to these two pioneering nations, their motivations, their actions, and the inevitable consequences of their colonization. The tutorial examines the geographical, technological, economic, political, and cultural patterns of the era. Go to www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/.


The European Voyages of Exploration
The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries
The modern world exists in a state of cultural, political, and economic globalisation. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries two nations, Portugal and Spain, pioneered the European discovery of sea routes that were the first channels of interaction between all of the world's continents, thus beginning the process of globalisation in which we all live today. This tutorial introduces the student to these two pioneering nations, their motivations, their actions, and the inevitable consequences of their colonisation. This tutorial also examines the geographical, technological, economic, political, and cultural patterns of that era.

TechnoTips

Online Dictionary

The website www.dictionary.com is my favorite. At the top of the site, you type a word into a search box, then select whether you want to search for the word in the dictionary or the thesaurus. The dictionary and thesaurus are extensive and could make excellent references and/or replacements for bound copies.

Amie Gruzs
High school teacher
Westerville, Ohio

Student Art

The site www.artsonia.com is much more than a place to showcase student artwork. You can visit this site to find art lessons, comment on your favorite piece of art, nominate your budding artist for "Student Artist of the Month," and purchase items that feature student artwork. The site also features artwork from 101 different countries.

As part of a project on teamwork, my class held an art competition to design artwork that embodied what we believed about our class team. We had Artsonia print T-shirts for us that featured the student design. All the entries that did not win also appeared on this site.

Betsy Norris
Sixth-grade English teacher
Shelbyville, Tennessee

Teaching Compound Words

To summarize a class lesson about compound words, I made several Microsoft® PowerPoint® slides that show two words written together to form a new word. Students read the slides together on our classroom's large screen monitor. Students also can use the slides for independent practice.

I extended the lesson with two online games: a compound words drag and drop game located at www.mrsmcgowan.com/quiz/compoundwords.htm and a multiple-choice activity at www.mrsmcgowan.com/quiz/compoundwords1.htm. My first graders access the webpages from our class website.

Marci McGowan
First-grade teacher
Spring Lake, New Jersey

[INSIDE SCOOP]

Facts on NEA's September 11 Website

What's up on what's offered.

Launched August 19, NEA's Remember September 11 website attracted thousands of visitors with its teacher-designed lesson plans and documents of American democracy, all searchable in an Internet "library" database so parents and educators could choose from a wide variety of age-appropriate material for K-12 students.

Unfortunately, some in the media severely misinterpreted the site's content, perhaps intentionally. Some NEA members who heard the media might have been confused. Here, we sort through the facts.

What is actually on the site?

More than 100 age-appropriate lesson plans and links to more than 60 outside resources that adults can use as they choose with their children and students.

The site is a celebration of America—and American values, like respect for law, freedom, and individual liberty. Rich with praise for heroism and calls to patriotism, the site provides links to the array of September 11-related information, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, words to "God Bless America," and flag etiquette. Also included are links for presidential speeches, defense and anti-terrorism agencies, and memorial sites to the victims.

NEA built its site by drawing on the experience and expertise of its members and its partners in educational excellence—the American Library Association, the Public Broadcasting System, the American Red Cross, and others.

So what's the big deal?

A Washington, D.C.-based newspaper singled out one of over 150 links on NEA's Remember September 11 site. This link notes the importance of understanding the difference between members of religious and ethnic groups and terrorists who share the religion or ethnicity.

The newspaper took some of the material from that one link out of context, distorted it, and then misreported it as NEA's viewpoint. The newspaper's inaccurate criticism seeped out to other media, spreading the distortion.

What is NEA's position?

NEA stands firm with our fellow Americans in condemning terrorism and its conspirators. In July 2001, NEA took a stand against the Taliban. And immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks, NEA and the American Federation of Teachers set up a joint NEAFT September 11 Fund to assist children of the victims and other members affected by this tragedy. By this past summer, $765,000 had been disbursed to individuals, along with $21,000 to New York City schools to replace blast-damaged copiers.

Can I decide about the website for myself?

Absolutely. Just go online to http://neahin.org/programs/schoolsafety/september11/.

Can NEA members expect more media tiffs in the future?

"NEA can be a target for those who resent our successful advocacy of public education," says NEA President Reg Weaver. "But we all need to stay focused on the higher ground—on the fact that we have a responsibility to give all children access to a quality education.

"That," says Weaver, "is the main story." ✔

Check out nea.org for . . .

Good News

Get the latest good news on public education—student achievement, teacher quality, and test scores—at www.nea.org/goodnews/.

Resources for NEA Members

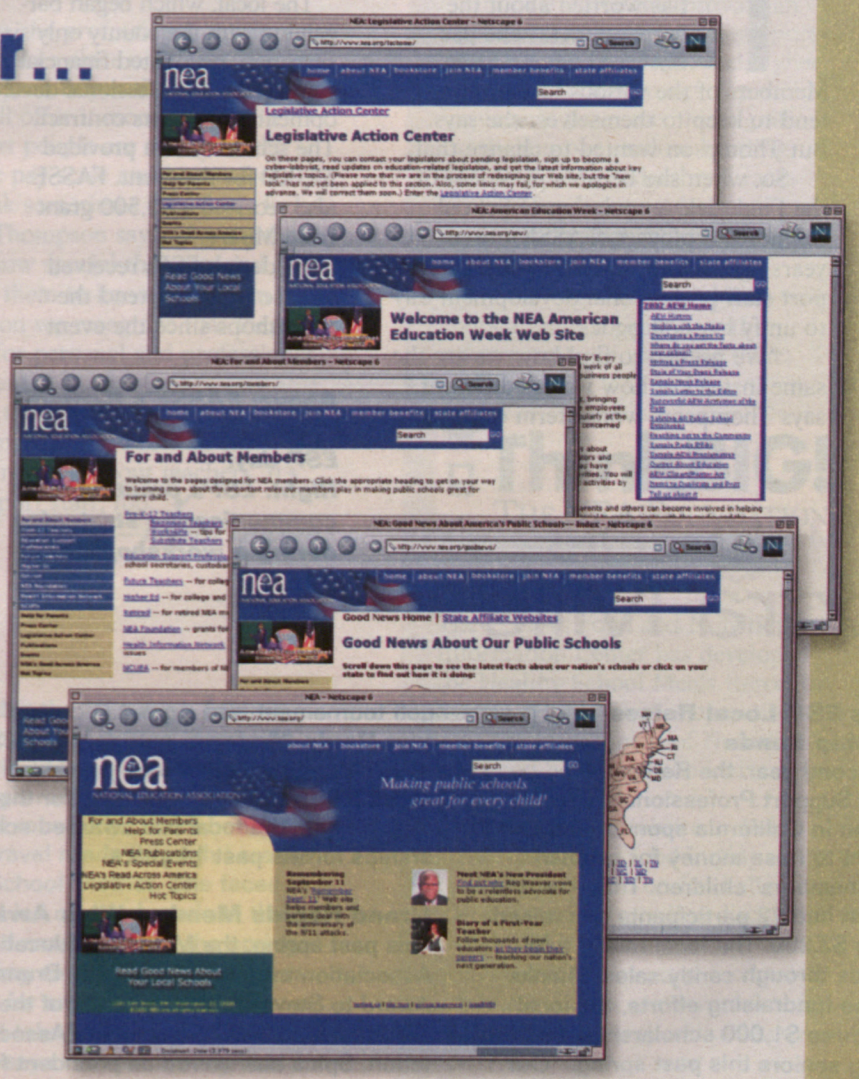
Follow links to resources—teacher tips and support professional, higher ed, and retired news—at www.nea.org/members.

American Education Week Resources

Discover how to promote your school and career at www.nea.org/aew/. Get suggestions for fostering strong relationships among parents, educators, and students, plus hands-on material to help you communicate with the media and local community.

News on Political Action

NEA's Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac gives you the latest updates on the hot political topics affecting public education. From this site, you can e-mail your members of Congress and offer them your thoughts on what it takes to give every student a quality education.


nea
Legislative Action Center
Welcome to the NEA American Education Week Web Site
For and About Members
Good News About Our Public Schools
Making public schools great for every child!

[PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT]

Learning From One Another

Maryland ESPs network during professional development day.

Photos by Charles Votaw

Throughout her career as an education support professional, Maryland member Barbara Thompson has worried about the "separateness" she has observed among ESPs. Members of the various job groups tend to keep to themselves, she says. But Thompson wanted to change that.

So, when she became president of the Frederick Association of School Support Employees (FASSE) three years ago, Thompson organized a support staff professional development day to unify her colleagues.

"We needed to find how we are the same instead of how we are different," says Thompson, whose term ended in July. "Everybody said it wouldn't work."

But Thompson's event succeeded. Since then, the professional development day has become an annual gathering where ESPs network and build their skills. In May, more than 150 secretaries, custodians, maintenance workers, and other ESPs attended the event. The day included workshops on leadership and communication skills, résumé writing, legal issues for ESPs, school safety, and workplace stress, among other topics.

FASSE organized the event with help from Frederick County Public Schools and the Maryland State Teachers Association.

The organizers tried to offer sessions that appeal to a variety of job groups, says Thompson, an administrative secretary at Twin Ridge Elementary School. Staff from MSTA, UniServ directors, members of FASSE, and representatives of the school system facilitated the workshops.

The local, which began bargaining with the county only six years ago, negotiated financial support for a professional development day into its contract. The school system provided $2,000 for the event. FASSE also received a $1,500 grant from MSTA.

Frederick ESPs received release time to attend the workshops since the event took place on a county staff development day. Attendees also received their normal pay, if they ordinarily would have worked that day. (Bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and some instructional assistants were not paid for the day because students were not in school. They could attend the sessions on their own time.)

"This event exemplifies what we should be doing in this county, and that's learning from one another," says Jack Dale, superintendent of Frederick County Schools.

FASSE also used the day to recruit new members. The local encouraged participants to join on the spot by entering all new members in a drawing for a television/videocassette recorder system. About 30 new members signed up during the event.

The professional development day shows nonmembers how FASSE supports ESPs, Thompson says. Attendees also learned about the benefits of Association membership during many of the workshops, she adds.

Peggy Warfield, an instructional assis-

Above: FASSE's Barbara Thompson organized the ESP day.
Right: ESPs practice new communication strategies during a workshop.

Going the Extra Mile

Redlands ESP Local Raises Scholarship Funds
For the second year, the Redlands Education Support Professionals Association in California sponsored a golf tournament to raise money for scholarships for members' children. This year, the tournament had 72 participants and raised more than $2,200. The local raised additional funds through candy sales. Thanks to all of the fundraising efforts, the local awarded three $1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors this past spring. "Our golf tournament was a great success," says **Paula Monroe**, president of RESPA. Monroe credits RESPA vice president **Mike Shanteler** with the idea for the tournament. The local has awarded scholarships for the past 14 years.

Grand Rapids Member Wins Award
This past spring, the Michigan Education Association awarded its Leon A. Brunner Award to Steve Spica, president of the 600-member Grand Rapids ESP Association. Spica has served as president for the past five years. The award recognizes ESP members who make significant contributions to ESP issues and concerns.

"I really do appreciate the award—it's a great honor," Spica says in the *MEA Voice*. "I have such a wonderful team behind me."

Spica, who runs his school district's supply department, regularly speaks out against privatizing ESP services.

"I always say that if school systems privatize, they'll have people in their buildings who don't care and who don't know the kids or care about the kids like we do,"

[PROFILE]

Providing for Preschoolers

Joe Mahoney

Name: **Delores Murray**
Job Title: Instructional assistant, Mary Scott Elementary School, Richmond, Virginia

What I Do in My Job: I'm in the prekindergarten program and we develop the students emotionally and socially. Because of the Virginia Standards of Learning we are getting them ready for reading. We show them how to count and to recognize numbers and letters. We also review colors and shapes. This is part of the Virginia Preschool Initiative, which is similar to Head Start.

The Most Rewarding Part of My Job: Working with children and seeing them grasp a concept and learn something.

My Favorite Pastime: Watching classic movies, the old classics with Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Humphrey Bogart. My favorite is *Wuthering Heights* with Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivian Leigh.

How I've Helped My Association: I first became a site representative. Then I became the chair of the ESP Caucus of the Richmond Education Association. Then I was elected to the REA Board of Directors. I'm now on the Virginia Board. This year also is my last year on the Membership Advisory Committee.

My Community Involvement Includes: I serve on the East End Civic Board in Richmond. We help revitalize neighborhoods and work with the youth center in the area. I'm also a member of All Souls Presbyterian Church, and I taught Sunday school for a while.

A Little Known Fact About Me: I love music. My favorite is jazz. I also like reading a good book. I love the works of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. ✔

tant at the Frederick County Career and Technology Center, attends the professional development day every year.

"I come to see other support staff and to see what FASSE has done for us," she says. "I think it's beneficial to interact with people from other schools and share tips with colleagues."

Kandys Fitzpatrick, a special education program assistant at New Market and Twin Ridge elementary schools, agrees. "I definitely will be back next year," says Fitzpatrick, who attended for the first time this spring. "It's great to have the opportunity to do something like this."

For now, the professional development day takes place only once a year, but Thompson hopes the local ultimately will offer it more frequently.

"Support people are on the lower end of the pay scale and because of that I think sometimes they don't feel special," Thompson says. "I want them to know how special they are, and I also want them to know that as an organization we recognize that there is a hunger for personal and professional development.

"I want them to walk out of here today saying 'I'm here for the children.' It's not just about teachers. It's about support staff, too." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Spica says. "Our kids need support personnel, and our district needs us."

In for the Long Haul

Wyoming bus driver **Linda Fleming** knows all about long hours. Every weekday morning, Fleming heads to work before sunrise. While most people are still sleeping, Fleming is on her way to pick up the 59 students she transports to school. Hers is the first bus out of the garage each morning, and it will be the last one parked at night, notes the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*, which highlighted Fleming's efforts this past spring.

Fleming's route, which stretches 240 miles round trip, takes her along narrow gravel roads through Laramie County School District. She faces snow and ice covered roads in the winter and muddy ruts in the spring. But Fleming says she wouldn't trade her route for anything. "After 18 years, they can't take this route away from me," she says. "These are my kids."

RESOURCES

NEA Foundation Grants

Apply today for an Innovation Grant or Learning and Leadership Grant from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE). Grant amounts range from $1,000 to $3,000. Applicants may submit a proposal at any time.

Innovation Grants provide an opportunity for education support professionals, teachers, and higher education faculty to develop and implement programs that significantly improve student learning. Learning and Leadership Grants provide funds for professional development. For more information, go to the NFIE website at www.nfie.org. The Foundation will contact grant recipients within seven months of receiving their applications.

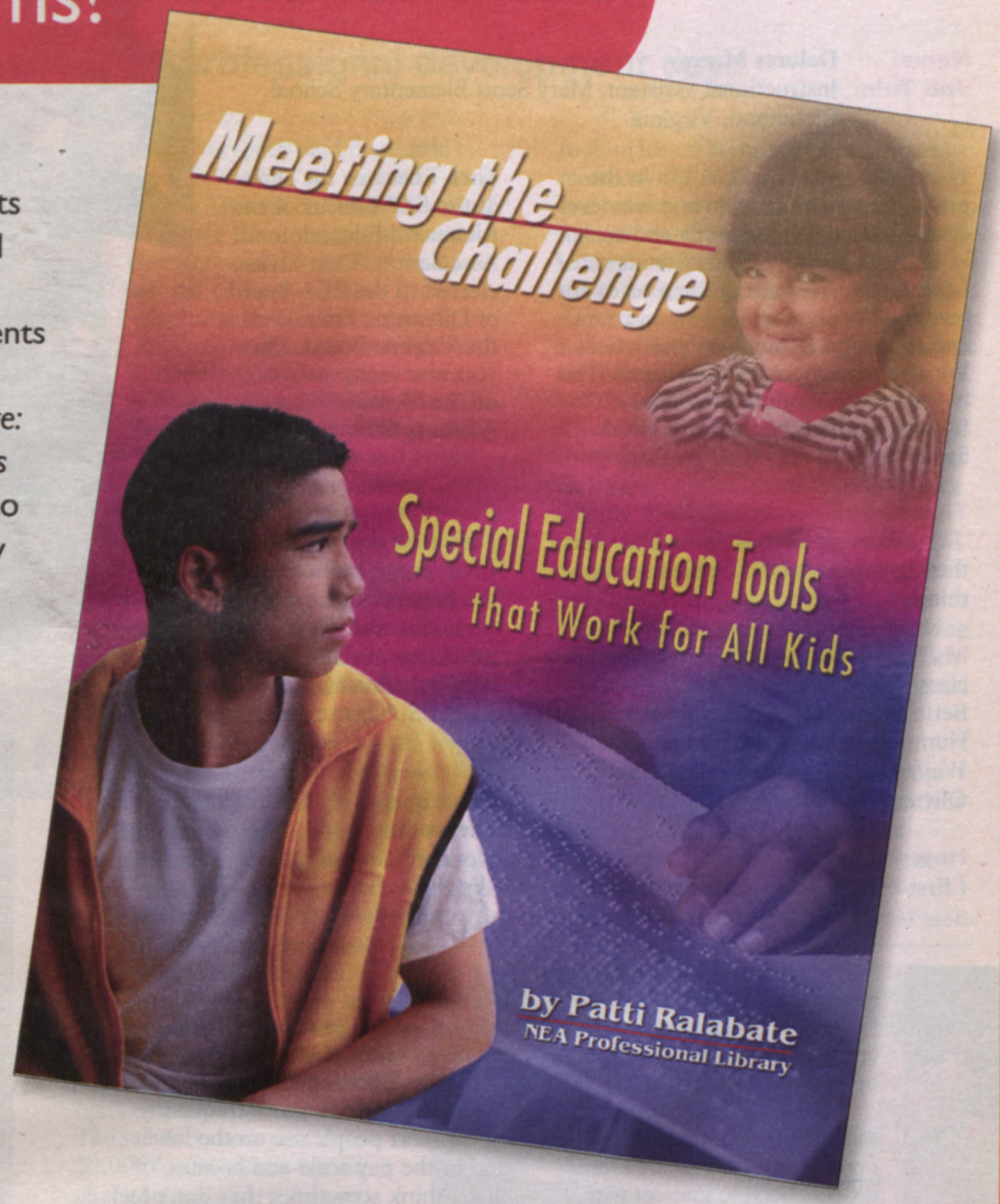
ThinkBIG! THE NEA FOUNDATION

Healthy School Meals

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Information Center has developed the Healthy School Meals Resource System (HSMRS) in cooperation with the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at the University of Maryland.

The HSMRS website includes menus, recipes, a food buying guide, information on food allergies, training materials, online discussion groups, Web links to food service professional groups, and food safety information. You can access the site at http://schoolmeals.nal.usda.gov:8001/.

Are you "meeting the challenges" of today's classrooms?



Classrooms today are full of students with various skill levels and special needs. To be an effective teacher, you need effective strategies to help students struggling to overcome academic or behavioral difficulties. *Meeting the Challenge: Special Education Tools that Work for All Kids* provides specialized resources designed to help you meet the individual needs of any student. This valuable toolkit addresses six critical areas:

- ✓ **Evaluating struggling students using classroom-based assessments.**
- ✓ **Observing behavior and positively addressing behavioral challenges.**
- ✓ **Using a collaborative team process.**
- ✓ **Developing educationally relevant student expectations.**
- ✓ **Providing accommodations and modifications.**
- ✓ **Communicating effectively with parents.**

This book is filled with useful ideas and practical, timesaving strategies, along with sample worksheets and other perforated forms to copy and use "as is" or modify for your own use. Whether you're a general education teacher or a special educator, you'll find tools you can use every day.

160 pp. Item #2022-7-00-D
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Tax Advice for Teachers

Q: Can teachers claim expenses on their taxes for school supplies purchased during the year?

A: The IRS has some good news for teachers this year with the passing of the "Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002."

This year and next, eligible teachers can take an Educator Expenses Deduction of up to $250 for out-of-pocket expenses for books and classroom supplies. The amount is subtracted when figuring out your adjusted gross income. But you need to keep records including the date, amount, and purpose of each purchase.

Details on this and other new tax law changes are in IRS Publication 3991, available on the IRS website, www.irs.gov, or by calling 800/TAX-FORM.

Q: My house is paid for but I'd like to borrow $50,000 to build an addition. Should I get a traditional mortgage or home equity loan, and could I use my 403 (b) money to pay off the loan?

A: I would not put your retirement money into the house. The tax-deferral in your 403 (b) makes it a valuable asset. You should let it grow for as long as possible.

A home equity line seems to make the most sense. A home equity loan is a fixed loan for a fixed time period. A home equity line is a revolving line of credit, which you can tap into and pay off as you like. My husband and I set one up two years ago when we refinanced our house, and we have used it twice for major purchases and then paid it off as quickly as possible. Because interest rates are so low, this is probably your best option.

Q: I will receive $20,000 as part of an early retirement package. Would it make sense to buy a home in a distant city where my grown child would live in it?

A: I don't want to give you a flat "no," because I don't know the city or your situation. But I'm always reluctant about investment plans that try to do "double duty."

I assume you are thinking that you will do your child a favor by helping him find a place to live and make a good investment for yourself at the same time. Those double-duty goals can be tough to pull off.

Suppose your investment declines in value. Would you regret it? Also, is the money eligible for a rollover into a tax-sheltered IRA? If so, you should certainly consider that.

Q: When I retire, should I take a lump sum or use some other strategy?

A: Because this is one of the most important financial decisions you will make, you should get some individual advice. Programs vary so much that it is impossible to give a broad answer.

The difference comes largely from how the lump sum is figured. Suppose your pension is $1,000 per month for life. To convert that to a single lump sum, an actuary must make assumptions about your life expectancy and the interest rate she might get on the money if it's kept in the pension plan rather than paying it out in a lump sum. Her assumptions make a big difference in your lump sum.

Some pensions reward the pensioner for taking an annual pension by subsidizing the amount or by subsidizing the joint and survivor benefit. Some plans provide medical care to those who take an annual pension but not to those who take a lump sum. What you should do depends on your type of pension plan as well as your health and life expectancy.

Here are two follow-up comments on earlier columns:

In the February 2002 *NEA Today* (page 37), you listed some good websites for teachers. I'd like to suggest my Teachers and Money site at www.angelfire.com/ca/hennings1/, which has links to good teacher retirement sites. I don't recommend specific funds but try to help teachers become better informed.

In response to the member who asked about her son taking a year off between high school and college (May 2002, page 43): AmeriCorps programs allow for travel and service to American communities. A year in this program would enhance his image to colleges and employers. For more information, see the AmeriCorps site at www.americorps.org.

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Susan Wood, sixth-grade teacher in Elk Grove, Illinois; Derek Haroldson, a teacher from Sauk City, Minnesota; and Lois Barreto, a third-grade teacher in Detroit, Michigan.

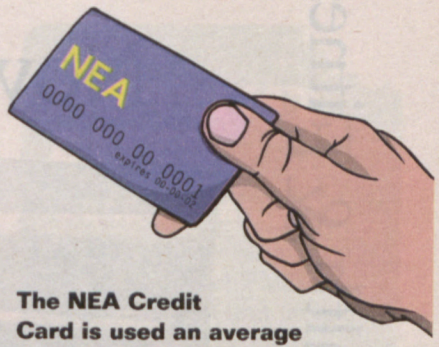
Wood: I encourage my students to recycle, and as part of a real-world application, I use recycled items in my classroom. I take the cup holder trays I get from fast food restaurants and place yogurt containers in them. I fill them with paints and use them as paint trays. It's good to leave one container on the tray filled with water so the students can rinse their brushes. The yogurt containers are easy to clean, and the trays become nicely decorated.

Haroldson: My class collects milk rings to learn about place value. The children really enjoy turning 10 ones into a group of 10, 10 tens into a group of 100, and 10 hundreds into a group of 1,000.

Barreto: I go to the armed services recruiting offices and ask for book covers and pencils. They are usually glad to oblige and have other free things for classrooms, too. I use the free pencils as rewards for 100 percent on tests.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.



The NEA Credit Card is used an average of 113,000 times a day.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Get a handle on your finances with help from NEA Financial Services programs. You and eligible family members can take advantage of the members-only interest rates of the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate® CD and NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account, which have consistently been among the highest nationwide. These deposit accounts also offer you the safety of FDIC insurance up to $100,000 per depositor.

The NEA CD account can be opened with just $1,000; it has flexible terms ranging from 6 to 60 months. You can establish an NEA Money Market account with $500—make up to six withdrawals per monthly statement cycle, three of which can be made by check.

Find out this week's rates or open an account by calling MBNA at 800/348-4632 and mentioning priority code JA068. You also can obtain NEA Deposit Program information on the Member Benefits website at www.neamb.com.

NEA also offers great deals on credit cards to members and their families. The NEA Platinum Plus® Card and the NEA Quantum Credit Card offered by MBNA America both feature low annual percentage rates, a high credit line, no annual fee, 24-hour secure online account access, and much more.

For more information about NEA Credit Card rates, costs, and fees, or to apply, visit www.neamb.com or call 800/822-7632.

The NEA-Sponsored Deposit and NEA Credit Card programs are both issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A. No membership dues are used to market these programs.

Now Take a Deeeeep Breath...

David Bacon

Students in Cathy Klein's second-grade class at Daniel Webster Elementary School say yoga gives them a challenge they enjoy.

It's been the mind-calming choice of the Zen set for years, but schoolchildren are now doing yoga in class—and loving it.

So what do you do with 20 antsy second graders who want to jump and play but have no physical education class to go to and no recess in sight?

If you're NEA member Cathy Klein, you transform your classroom into a studio (of sorts) for yoga.

New-Age nuttiness? Think again.

In Klein's class at the Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco—and at a growing number of schools throughout her district—yoga is fast becoming a ritual of the school day. Like for the hordes of adults who are now flocking to it, the allure is not just in its capacity to calm but also in the rigor of its physical challenge. And in Klein's district, where regular elementary teachers must play the role of P.E. teachers, too, that makes this Eastern practice a double whammy of a gift.

For one, says Klein, it's portable—you can do it anywhere, anytime. It's individualized and noncompetitive—"Every child has his or her own goal to reach." It focuses strictly on the physical—no Hindu deities or Sanskrit here. And it forces students to develop concentration and self-awareness, but in a fun way.

Consider the drill: On a sunny school morning, Klein gently directs her students, bustling and anxious after writing in their journals, to "take a quiet moment" and move their desks to the sides. Then with her step-by-step guidance, they breathe deeply. They stretch. They bend. They contort their bodies into shapes named for what they mimic—"butterfly," "crescent moon," "seahorse."

Twenty minutes later, settled and relaxed, they muse about the "hard parts" and the "fun parts" and how "happy," flexible, and accomplished they feel.

It's a startling transformation, particularly for a handful of the students who started the day restive and contrary. They, like many of San Francisco's public school children, hail from families with social and economic challenges. "So to see them let go all that anxiety," says Klein, "is just amazing to me."

So soothing is just the simple act of deep breathing, Klein discovered, that she stops the class periodically throughout the day—before a test, lunch, or a math exercise—to have them do only that.

The yoga program started five years ago as the brainchild of Tony Sanchez, founder of the nonprofit U.S. Yoga Association. With his wife, Sandy Wong-Sanchez, he trained teachers at one elementary school for a pilot program, then branched out to other schools with the support of foundation grants. Now the two are seeking a federal grant that would let them reach every school in the district.

What's exciting, says Tony Sanchez, is the vast potential for yoga's application. There are the social lessons, such as teaching kids to recognize personal space. But it's the academic possibilities that really wow. Wong-Sanchez has developed 40 different lesson plans for using yoga to learn everything from geometry and physics to writing.

Phyllis Camp, an NEA member and physical education teacher at the James Lick Middle School, a few miles from Webster, says she routinely relies on yoga in her classes. But she uses it mainly to help kids strengthen muscles and stretch before and after more vigorous sports.

"It really helps kids focus on gaining inner control," says Camp, who was part of the pilot program five years ago and now teaches parents and teachers. "It's gone the next minute, of course," she laughs, "but they remember that moment, and can call on it—and that's the beauty."

Students in her class agree. Having moved fluidly through poses from the "full moon" to the "cocoon," Ebrahaim Algubcani, 13, says he loves yoga and often uses it to deal with siblings at home.

"They usually get me mad," he says, "but when I do those stretches, I relax. And my mom likes that." ✔

—Marilyn Milloy

FOR MORE:
Contact the U.S. Yoga Association 415/931-9642 or visit www.usyoga.org.

What's Up at HIN?

NEA Health Information Network

■ HELPING PARENTS TALK ABOUT DRUGS
Parents are the key to preventing illicit drug use among kids. But they find it difficult to determine how best to talk about it. What should they say? To make it easier to find out, a new @Work program gives parents access to detailed information—where they work. Encourage parents to visit www.theantidrug.com. NEA-HIN is an active partner in the @Work program, a part of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

■ FIGHTING FOR HEALTHIER KIDS
Citing a looming health crisis among the nation's children, NEA-HIN has joined a coalition of more than 25 national organizations in sponsoring the Healthy Schools Summit, October 7 and 8. A major ongoing initiative to fight obesity and improve nutrition and physical activity among America's children will be launched. Follow the action and find out about summit follow-up activities at www.actionforhealthykids.org.

■ OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
People who work in education die from breast cancer at a higher rate than women in general. Help save a life! Organize a cancer education activity for your school community. Visit HIN's Project REACH Breast and Cervical Cancer Website, www.neahin.org/reach/, for simple, creative ideas and free cancer education materials. Education is the best protection!

■ ADVOCATING FOR BETTER INDOOR AIR
Breathing clean air is fundamental to life and to learning. NEA-HIN is compiling examples of contract language, policy and regulations, and organizing efforts around indoor air quality. Please send examples of your good works to jyoung@nea.org or to Jennie Young, 1201 16th St. N.W., Suite 521, Washington, DC 20036. Samples will be posted on the NEA-HIN website this fall.

NEA HIN

[WORKING OUT OUR STRESS]

A Healthy Weight? No Problem!

We already know excess body weight can rob us of energy, longevity, and good health. What we often fail to remember is that weight management doesn't take a small miracle.

It may sound like so much hokum, but it's true: Getting yourself to a healthy weight is a feat just about anyone can achieve. And it can be done without joining a gym, giving up delicious foods, or starving until you squeeze into size 10 jeans.

"You can stop weight gain, lose 10 percent of your body weight—that's at least a clothing size—and your program can be easy, flexible, and individualized," says George Blackburn, M.D., Ph.D., associate director of Nutrition at Harvard Medical School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"It's like learning math or the piano," adds Blackburn. Practice, stick with it, and you'll get good results.

The first and most important step is finding out where you stand. If you're already at the perfect weight (indicated by a Body Mass Index [BMI] of 24 or below; see formula in *Healthy Bites*), congratulations! You just need to keep excess pounds at bay. If you're slightly overweight (a BMI of 25 to 29.9), your chances of developing certain health problems, such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease increase. People with a BMI of 30 or above are obese and face dramatically increased odds for cardiovascular, circulatory, reproductive, (women only) and other health problems. Unfortunately, more than 60 percent of American adults fall into the latter two categories.

But take heart: No matter where you stand on the BMI scale, there's hope. First, Blackburn advises, do no harm—don't gain any more weight if you're where you need to be. Second, gradually make nutritious, fiber-packed food part of your diet. And third, pick an activity or two that you like, and get moving.

Educators who have little time or money to spend on gourmet salads or lunchtime trips to trendy eateries, for example, can jumpstart a weight loss or weight maintenance program with nutritionally sound, inexpensive meal replacements, Blackburn says. For instance, an apple and a can of SlimFast (yes, it's good for you, and studies show that people who use meal replacements keep weight off), cost about $1.50. Overall, Blackburn says, look at it this way. You eat 21 meals per week. Make at least 10 of those structured, low-calorie entrees and do your best to add fresh fruit or a serving of vegetables until you get to five servings a day. Then, get moving.

If you're on cafeteria, hall or playground duty, don't stand. Walk around, throw a ball, jump rope. And try a pedometer, Blackburn suggests. It counts your steps as you walk. Just strap it on and see how many steps you can add each day.

Stay with this plan for, say, a grading period, and "don't be an absentee or a drop out," says Blackburn. Once you gain more energy and confidence, consider one of the more structured weight loss programs, such as Weight Watchers. They're a great way to tackle the next 10 or 20 pounds, says Blackburn, if that's what you need to lose. For advice on obesity drugs or programs for significant weight loss, consult your physician.

Just remember: "You can't let junk food and inactivity take away your quality of life," says Blackburn. "Just say, 'I'm not going to take it,'" and get started." ✔

TALK TO US

This is the second in a series of articles designed to help NEA members tackle stress and develop habits that will lead to better health. If you have a comment or question, please e-mail mmilloy@nea.org.

Ted Pitts

A Case of Nerves?

Hunger isn't the only thing that'll make you dive headfirst into a bag of chips. Stress can send you packing it in, too. Kelly Brownell, Ph.D., a psychologist and director of the Yale Center for Eating and Weight Disorders in Connecticut, offers these tips to keep it under control:

- **Avoid rushing around; practice a little time management.**
- **Decide you're going to accept the little things that go wrong each day.**
- **Find a pal who will let you vent, or just call someone who makes you laugh.**
- **Learn a relaxation or deep breathing exercise that you can do anytime or anywhere.**
- **Pick an activity other than eating that will calm you down—a brisk walk or a good book tucked in your desk drawer.**

HEALTHY BITES

BROWN BAGGIN' IT

Want to sustain your energy beyond lunch? Make a sandwich with lean protein picks like turkey, ham, chicken breast, or tuna. For a savory treat, use an onion or "everything" bagel with honey mustard. Hold down the mayo, but don't forget the lettuce and tomato—that's one of your five-a-day fruit or vegetable servings. Good ol' peanut butter and jelly works well, too (two tablespoons of peanut butter is a serving). Even hard-boiled eggs are great. *Remember:* High-fat choices like hamburgers or fried chicken don't pack the protein punch because, calorie for calorie, fat crowds out the protein and may slow you down.

Women: Double up by choosing protein-rich foods with calcium: a handful of almonds, yogurt, or "string cheese."

FIND YOUR BMI

Body Mass Index (BMI) is the most reliable way to measure your fat to muscle ratio, as it relates to your height. A single BMI point is equal to about six pounds of weight. To calculate your BMI, use this formula: Your weight in pounds x 705, divided twice by your height in inches = your BMI.

GOOD QUESTION!

Q: I know it's good for me, but I don't like drinking 6-8 glasses of water per day. Can I replace my water with something else?

A: Absolutely. While water should be your primary source for staying hydrated, you can also drink 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices, milk, and herbal or decaffeinated teas as part of your daily water requirement. However, stay clear of alcoholic beverages, coffee, regular teas, and sodas, as these drinks rob your body of fluid and essential nutrients.

Creating a Community Cookbook

David Quinn definitely knows what's cooking. In fact, he probably gave you the recipe.

Quinn, a high school English teacher from Seattle, Washington, oversees the Internet's number one food website, allrecipes.com. Quinn's site offers more than 20,000 recipes for novice cooks and gourmet chefs alike. The site also includes nutritional information, meal plans, coupons, and cooking tutorials. With more than 3 million unique visitors each month, allrecipes.com sees more traffic than sites for Martha Stewart and the Food Network.

"We're a community cookbook," Quinn says.

Quinn's food empire started in 1997 with a single website, cookierecipe.com, which he and his partners designed so their wives could trade cookie recipes. That site won Yahoo's site of the day and site of the month awards. The *Seattle Times* named cookierecipe.com the best free website of 1997.

Visitors to the site also wanted to exchange recipes for other treats. Quinn and his associates responded with cakerecipe.com, pierecipe.com, and breadrecipe.com. In 1998, the group merged all of the sites into allrecipes.com.

"We just listened to the users," Quinn says. "We weren't thinking 'let's make lots of money.' We were thinking 'let's build this really cool product.'"

Allrecipes.com now includes recipes for appetizers, soups, and entrees, as well as desserts. Users also can link to recipes developed by the company's partners, including Kraft, Hershey's, and Betty Crocker. ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Ellen Banner

Gary Emeigh

Riding for Research

When Delaware NEA members **Charlie Michels** and **Mike Firch** started cycling together six years ago, they never expected to go on a search for an AIDS vaccine. But during the past two years, the two educators have raised more than $22,000 for AIDS vaccine research by participating in benefit bike rides.

"When Charlie and I decided to do this, it was a way to help promote what seemed to be an underdog," says Firch (shown here right), a guidance counselor at Seaford High School. "Something for AIDS vaccines doesn't get a lot of support or attention."

Michels, a technology education teacher at Chipman Middle School, agrees. "It's not that this cause is any more important, it just caught our attention, and we jumped in with both feet."

The two friends completed their first benefit ride in August 2000 when they rode 510 miles across Alaska. Last year, Firch completed a second AIDS vaccine ride in Montana. This summer, they spent two days riding across Delaware to promote the cause.

Both Firch and Michels ride several times a week and lift weights to prepare for their marathon rides. But the emotional demands of the benefit rides far outweigh the physical ones, they say.

"When I first went to Alaska I thought I was going there to ride a bike for a wonderful cause," says Firch. "But when I was there I experienced a spiritual, emotional, and physical sensation that continues to move through me on a daily basis."

Michels draws strength from fellow riders. "You might be at the end of a long climb, and there's a dozen riders at the top cheering you on," he says. "The trick is to take that feeling and bring it back home." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at kloschert@nea.org.

Teacher at Sea

When **Dana Tomlinson** boarded the *Ka'imimoana* as part of the Teacher at Sea program, she wanted to act like "a fly on the wall," silently observing the ship's 30-member crew. But Tomlinson, a sixth-grade teacher in San Diego, California, quickly became a part of the team, helping with the various experiments conducted on the ship.

Tomlinson first learned about the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's Teacher at Sea program from a fellow teacher. When she saw that one of the voyages traveled to the Galapagos Islands, Tomlinson was hooked. She always had dreamed of visiting the islands, a dream she fulfilled at the end of her voyage.

During her month-long trip, Tomlinson taught students around the world about the data scientists gathered on weather disturbances in the Pacific. During live Web broadcasts, Tomlinson interviewed crew members and explained to students the importance of the scientists' research. She answered students' questions by e-mail and posted a daily log and digital pictures on her website.

"I was taught how to use different devices aboard the ship and, to me, that was the ultimate hands-on experience," Tomlinson says. "My whole experience was great, and teachers should definitely try and do it once, because it is a real-life laboratory and you learn so much every day." ✔

—Urmila Subramanyam

NOAA

Denise Stookey

Tennessee Coin Celebrates Music

In June 2000, Tennessee member **Shawn Stookey** had his fourth- through eighth-grade art classes create sketches for the U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarters Program. Stookey created his own drawing as an example for the students at Lakeview School in New Johnsonville. When the students sent their submissions to the coin commission, Stookey added his sketch to the pile, not thinking much of it.

By April 2001, the Fine Arts Commission of Tennessee had selected his drawing from more than 1,000 submissions as the design for the state quarter. After the governor approved the design, the state unveiled its quarter at a January reception to honor Stookey's work.

His theme for the coin weaves together Tennessee's musical heritage. The design includes a trumpet (for the blues of Memphis), a guitar (representing the Grand Ole Opry), and a violin over a songbook (signifying bluegrass). The U.S. Mint modified Stookey's original sketch, but he doesn't mind the changes. They make the design more dynamic, he says.

Stookey admits that people don't always believe he designed the quarter. "They kind of look at me for a second and are like, 'yeah right,' and I have tell them it really was mine," Stookey says. ✔

—Urmila Subramanyam

Passing on the Art of Story

To retired elementary teacher **Judy Wolfman**, of York, Pennsylvania, storytelling is the quickest way to teach creative writing. But it wasn't a lesson she learned right away.

"During my teaching years I really struggled to get students to write stories about themselves," explains Wolfman, an NEA-Retired member. "I would teach them all the basics of writing, but when it came time to put pen to paper, they just couldn't do it—until I made a change that made the difference."

Wolfman began using her skills as a budding storyteller and children's author to help students discover their own creative talents. "I learned that many of my students in my inner city school came from an oral tradition where stories were handed down," says Wolfman. "That's when I knew storytelling might be a way to reach them."

Wolfman gathered stories, added some activities, and students began to respond. She let students develop their own stories as well, by giving them prompts, beginning sentences, and characters to use.

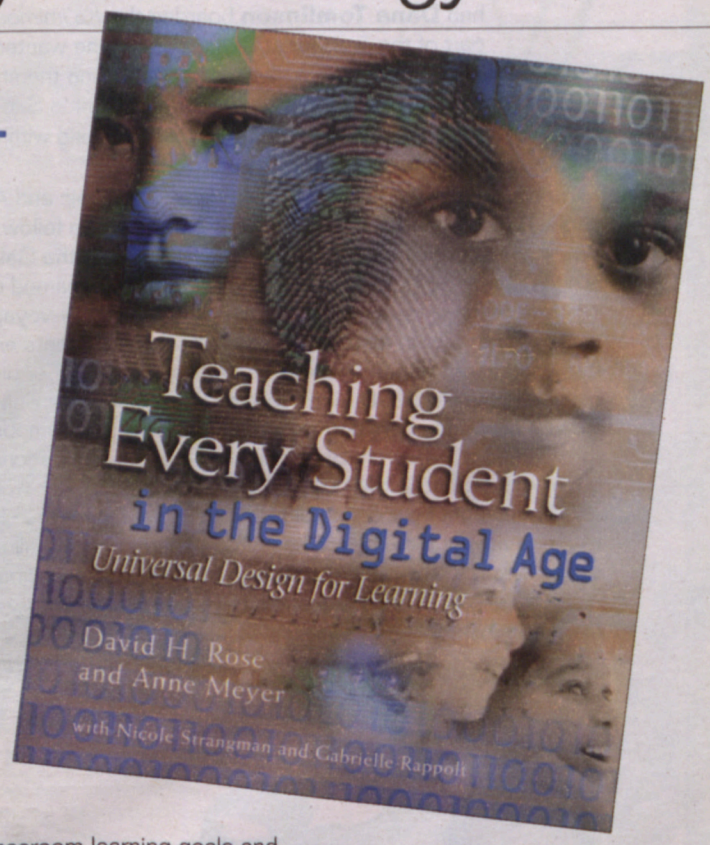
Since retiring in 1993, Wolfman has taken her lessons on the road. She now gives creative writing and storytelling workshops to students and teachers. ✔

—Anita Merina

John Whitehead

Increasing Access Through Technology

Digital media support lessons that adapt to each child's learning needs.



EXCERPT

"The challenge posed by greater diversity and greater accountability is to enable students with widely divergent needs, skills, and interests to attain the same high standards. . . . Fortunately, technological advances have equipped educators with tremendous new instructional resources in the form of computers and digital media."

TEACHING EVERY STUDENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE: UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING
By **David H. Rose and Anne Meyer (with Nicole Strangman and Gabrielle Rappolt)**
216 pp. $26.95 paperback
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Way back in the 1980s authors Rose and Meyer, along with researchers at their nonprofit Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), began exploring how technology could be used to help students with disabilities. By the early 1990s, they had developed an award-winning series of electronic books. Students could have text read aloud by a computer, "turn pages" with a voice command, and select a new text to read with the click of a switch.

That work led Rose and Meyer to an "a-ha" moment: Rather than make students adapt to an inflexible, text-supported curriculum, why not change the way curriculum itself is developed via new technologies?

Thus was born the idea of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). As the book explains, universal design refers to built-in accommodations such as ramps, sidewalk curb cuts, and automatic doors that benefit a range of users, from those in wheelchairs to shoppers pushing grocery carts. In the UDL model, digital technologies are marshaled to meet the diverse needs and abilities of students by providing multiple ways of accessing information and demonstrating their understanding.

The book is broken into two parts. Part One provides a clear review of UDL's scientific and theoretical underpinnings, including recent brain research that explains why particular lessons or classroom tasks challenge students in different ways. The section is helped by a few well-chosen illustrations and by anecdotal sidebars that buttress the argument against instruction and assessment that rely exclusively on "fixed," text-based media.

Part Two looks at the practical applications of UDL principles. How can classroom learning goals and standards be shaped and expressed to include all students? How can new media enable all learners to reach these standards by various paths? How do digital technologies help teachers design fair and ongoing assessments that support individual learning goals?

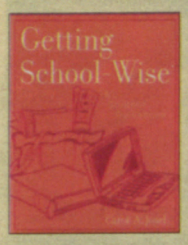
One example highlights CAST's Thinking Reader software for reading instruction. For some students, the computer highlights text and reads it aloud; others can get a definition of a word they don't understand with a mouse click. Occasionally, a cartoon genie appears onscreen and prompts them to think more deeply about the text—say, to summarize or predict. Students type their responses into a log at the bottom of the screen that helps their teacher assess their progress. Teachers who use Thinking Reader closely monitor students and provide targeted guidance.

At a time when federal law says special-education students must have the opportunity to learn from the same curriculum as their peers, and when state standards require schools to improve outcomes for all students, this book provides fresh suggestions for how new tools can help educators meet those goals and improve K-12 education across the board.

—David T. Gordon
Editor, Harvard Education Letter

BOOKS by NEA Members

Getting School-Wise: A Student Guidebook
By Carol A. Josel



This book, written by a veteran teacher and learning specialist, outlines a valuable set of teaching strategies and skills in a fun and accessible format. Organization skills, learning styles, and how to teach students to be effective listeners are just a few of the topics covered that will help improve student and teacher performance. 176 pp. $29.95 from Scarecrow Press, Inc. To order, call 800/462-6420 or go to www.scarecroweducation.com.

Collaborating To Meet Standards: Teacher/ Librarian Partnerships for K-6
By Toni Buzzeo

Written for library media specialists and their teaching partners, this book presents comprehensive units in a standardized template that can be adapted and used in librarians' own collaboration efforts. Easy to read and use, the book also lists the benefits of collaboration, as well as ways to overcome obstacles. 224 pp. $39.95 from Linworth Publishing. To order, call 800/786-5017 or visit www.linworth.com.

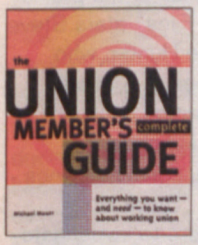
Internet-Based Activities for High School Mathematics: Real-World Content and Applications
By Tracy Kearnes and Beverly May

Two veteran math teachers connect real-time data from the Internet with algebra and geometry concepts in this workbook. Choose from eight activities that include step-by-step instructions, Web addresses, questions, and word problems. 74 pp. $12.95 from the Science and Mathematics Network. To order, go to www.sciencemathnetwork.org.

Tears Are Wept, Memories Are Kept: A Remembrance Book for Bereaved Children and Families
By Eleisa Trampler, Mary Hernandez, and the Children of Colorado

Retired Denver public schools teacher Eleisa Trampler compiled this book of sentiments and drawings by K-12 students in Denver area schools to help others deal with the loss of loved ones. The book also has space to record feelings, thoughts, and memories of a special someone. 222 pp. $14 from Maval Publishing, Inc. To order, go to www.maval.com.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

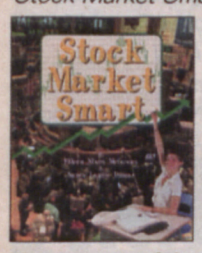


Getting to Know Unions

If you're new to a union or simply want a good overview of how unions function, check out *The Union Member's Complete Guide* by Michael Mauer. Using plain language, the book covers all aspects of workers' unions, including member rights, contract negotiation, and what dues are used for. 160 pp. $12.95 from Union Communication Services. To order, call 800/321-2545 or visit www.unionist.com.

From Sesame Street to Wall Street

It's never too early to start learning about the ins and outs of the stock market. Geared for grades 5-8, *Stock Market Smart* by Eileen Nixon McGowan and Nancy Lagow Dumas teaches students basic terminology, how to buy and sell stocks, and how to set up portfolios. $23.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com or call 800/462-4703.



Start the Presses

Is the student newspaper lacking in luster? Are you trying to get students' work published? Do you want to start a website and get students involved? Then get some pointers from *Publishing With Students: A Comprehensive Guide* by ESL teacher Chris Weber. With 20 years of publication experience in and out of the classroom, Weber shows how you can have award-winning publications and spark confidence and creativity in your students. 240 pp. $21.15 from Heinemann. To order, go to www.heinemann.com, or call 800/225-5800.

Get Plugged In

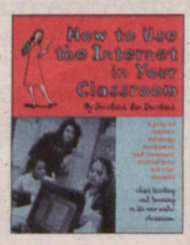
The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation now offers *Plugged In*, a downloadable guide for students and teachers of journalism. Chapters include student case studies, lessons on checking the credibility of online sources, sites that make finding story ideas easier (beyond Yahoo and Google search engines), and training exercises that sharpen Web research skills. To download, go to www.rtnda.org/resources/pluggedin.pdf.

An African Safari

Majestic views and wild animals await you in Tim Knight's *Journey Into Africa: A Nature Discovery Trip.* Filled with great pictures and interesting facts, the book will draw young readers back to Africa again and again. 48 pp. $18.95 from Oxford University Press. To order, go to www.oup-usa.org.

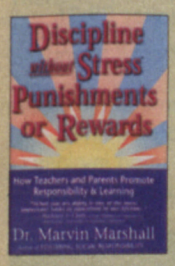
Enter the Internet

Created by teachers, *How to Use the Internet In Your Classroom* is a guide for educators who want to use the Internet in class but aren't sure how to incorporate it in lessons. Learn from the authors' lesson plans, websites, and words of wisdom. Take a virtual field trip to other lands and learn computer etiquette. 96 pp. $18 from the Teacher's Network. To order, go to www.teachersnetwork.org or call 212/966-5582.



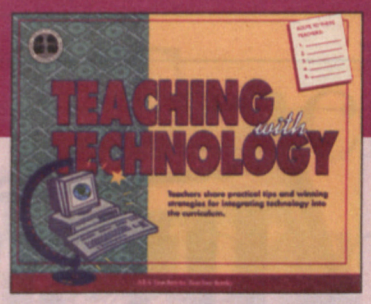
Discipline Without Stress, Punishments, or Rewards

By Marvin Marshall



Learn how to reduce stress, motivate others, foster responsibility, and advance learning with strategies that promote collaboration and eliminate the reward/punishment system of discipline. With experience in teaching, administration, and counseling, the author offers practical solutions to problems in education and parenting. 300 pp. $39.95 from Piper Press. To order, call 800/606-6105 or go to www.piperpress.com.

From the NEA Professional Library



Teaching with Technology
The Teacher-to-Teacher Series
96 pp. $9.95 NEA members
$12.95 nonmembers
#2915-1-00-FN

EXCERPT

The entire front perimeter of our school has been divided into 11 whimsical "literacy" gardens, each based on a popular children's book. After choosing a book and theme for their gardens, students used a computer drawing program to help them map out a design. Then they conducted research by going online to gardening Web sites for kids.

In a world where schools are wired and students surf the Net with ease, teachers know that it's not enough for kids to be computer literate; they also need to be information literate. *Teaching with Technology* helps educators shift their focus from teaching about technology to integrating technology as a learning tool for core subjects. Classroom and computer resource teachers, along with library/media specialists, share their strategies for revamping instruction and helping students develop the critical thinking and interpersonal skills they need to become better learners.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

TVTIPS

Bang, Bang You're Dead

Showtime, Sunday, October 13, 2002, 8-9:30 p.m., ET, check local listings.

Christopher Wray-McCann/Showtime

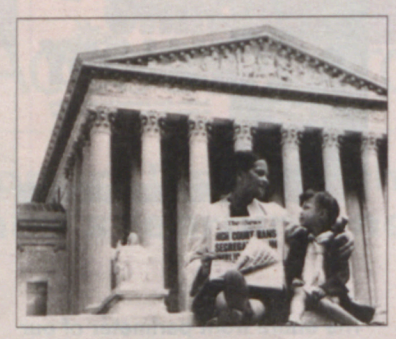
Based on William Mastrosimone's play of the same name, this drama offers an unflinching look at youth violence and the problems of achieving social and emotional health in schools today. The film depicts events in a high school where violence is pervasive when a drama teacher and his students try to stage a production of Mastrosimone's play. A guide to the film produced by KIDSNET includes an action workshop for educators, helping professionals, parents, and teens, and is available at www.KIDSNET.org. Parents/teachers should preview the program by themselves to determine if it's appropriate to show to their children/students, and they should lead follow-up discussions after any viewing.

TV Tips are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and from Cable in the Classroom at www.ciconline.org.

TVTIPS

The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow

PBS, Tuesdays, October 1–22, 10 p.m., ET, check local listings.
This four-part series explores the complexities that defined life during the Jim Crow era. The first major documentary to examine this oppressive era, the series spans the years from the end of the Civil War to the start of the modern Civil Rights movement in the 1950s.



Discovery Kids on NBC

NBC, October 5, 10 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Discovery Kids cable network and NBC will debut a Saturday three-hour programming block inspired by shows from the Discovery Network. "Walking with Dinosaurs and Kids" uses computer animation to recreate the sights and sounds of the prehistoric world. "Croc Files" stars Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, who investigates all types of wild animals. "TLC's Operation Junkyard" features teams of kids who use trash to create functional machines, such as catapults. "Black Hole High" invites viewers to investigate strange events and scientific mysteries at an unusual school.

Sporting Physics

ESPN2, October 7, 14, 21, and 28, 5:30 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Designed for middle and high school students, this series of four, 30-minute episodes features professional athletes demonstrating math and physics concepts, such as algebra and friction, through sports. Programs and lesson plans can be used in the classroom. Lesson plans are available at www.sportsfigures.espn.com.

Nick News: Special Edition

Nickelodeon, October 7 and 30, 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Linda Ellerbee created this series of specials from the NEA and Peabody Award-winning news program for kids in grades 4–6. In "Faces of Hope: The Kids of Afghanistan," she explores life in Afghanistan after Taliban rule. She takes questions from American kids on her visit to the country and talks with Afghan children in their homes, in school, at play, and at work. The program can be taped and used in the classroom for 10 years. A lesson plan is available at www.teachers.nick.com.

November Warriors

History Channel, October 28-31 (one episode per day), 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This four-part program chronicles the history of American presidential elections and can be used in class for two years, along with a lesson

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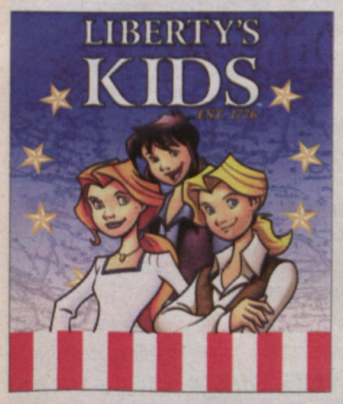
plan at www.historychannel.com/classroom. The first episode, "Noble Dreams/American Realities," outlines the first battles for the presidency. Part 2, "Trial By Fire," explores the "free vs. slave" issue in the Lincoln/Douglas presidential race and looks at whistle-stop campaigning and the introduction of a third party. Part 3, "The New Arena," traces presidential campaigns from the 1930s to John F. Kennedy's election in 1960, and the final episode, "The Modern Campaign," looks at more recent presidential campaigns, up to Ronald Reagan's.

Liberty's Kids

PBS, Mondays-Fridays in October, check local listings.

This animated series introduces 7 to 12-year-olds to the exciting stories and people behind the birth of the United States. Each program presents historical events seen through the eyes of two teenage apprentices who work in Benjamin Franklin's print shop and experience the American Revolution firsthand. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for one year. A companion website is available at http://pbskids.org/libertyskids.



Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers

PBS, check local listings.

This five-part series examines how children learn to read, why so many struggle, and how adults can help them. Each 30-minute episode illustrates a stage of the reading process, incorporating the latest research and featuring top U.S. reading experts. Shows highlight children's book authors, including Norman Bridwell *(Clifford the Big Red Dog)* and Kate Duke *(Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One)*. Launching Young Readers is part of the multimedia initiative Reading Rockets, which offers information to parents and educators so they can help kids become avid readers. For more, go to www.readingrockets.org.

READING rockets

WEB WINNERS

Staying Healthy

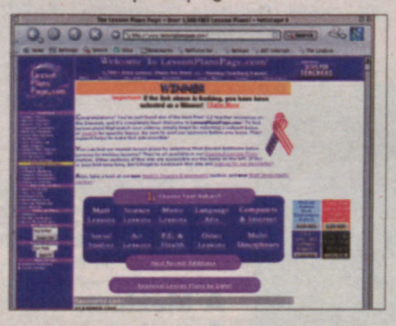
Use this site to teach children healthy habits early. Focusing on four health themes—Eat Well, Stay Fit; Open Wide; Dealing with Feelings; and Head Lice Advice—the site offers units with activity sheets for kids and information for adults. The themes are also connected to an episode of the PBS series "Arthur." Go to http://pbskids.org/arthur/grownups/health_tips/index.html.

Frog Dissection?

Leave your facemask in the drawer and grab a virtual scalpel instead. This site walks you through the dissection of a common bullfrog. Interactive animations, Flash objects, educational text, and a soundtrack make for a unique, odorless learning experience. Set aside at least 60 minutes to click your way through Frog Guts. Go to www.froguts.com.

Lesson Plans

The Lesson Plans Page collects over 1,000 ready-to-use lesson plans, primarily at the elementary level, that were developed by students and faculty at The University of Missouri. Launched in October 1996, this site serves elementary school teachers, preservice teachers, and parents. Go to www.lessonplanspage.com.



America's Library

With more than 4,500 items from the Library of Congress' collection on its website, America's Library is a good place to go to learn about

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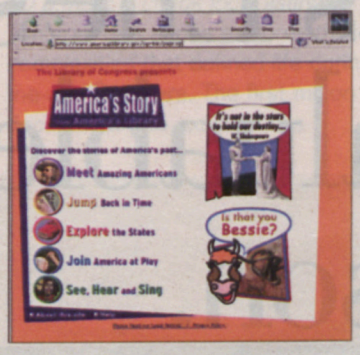
American history and culture. Each of the site's five sections contain different activities to keep kids engaged and learning. Go to www.americaslibrary.gov.

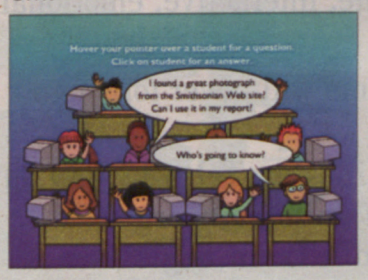


Tracking the Payback

Campaign donations, special interest groups, and lobbyists. They all have a lot of influence on Congress and what laws are passed. Check out this site to see who's giving money to whom and how much they are giving. Published by the nonprofit, nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, this site is useful for students learning about campaign contributions and lobbying. Check it out at www.opensecrets.org/payback.

Cyberspace Copyrights

Use this interactive activity to quickly learn about copyright issues on the World Wide Web. Visitors view 11 questions students, teachers, and parents may have about using Web images, sound recordings, and text in papers, presentations, and Web projects. Go to www.cyberbee.com/cb_copyright.swf.


Hover your pointer over a student for a question.
Click on student for an answer.
I found a great photograph from the Smithsonian Web site! Can I use it in my report?
Who's going to know?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEA UniServ Internships

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking eligible candidates for the 2003 UniServ Intern Program. Individuals who successfully complete the four-and-a-half week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate. All individuals must be committed to moving for the three-month field experience.

To be eligible for the internship you must:

1. Be an ethnic minority or female as designated by the U.S. Census.
2. Be an active NEA member for at least one year.
3. Have basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level.
4. Be committed to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program.
5. Have excellent interpersonal skills.
6. Have a willingness to participate in intensive training.
7. Have a willingness to resign all Association offices at the local, state, and national level.
8. Have a willingness to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ Intern graduates; employment is a state/local decision.

If you're thinking of applying to the program, send a letter of interest to: Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, Ste. 413, 1201 16th Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20036.

All letters of interest must be received at NEA by December 6, 2002, by U.S. mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies will not be accepted. Letters received after the deadline will not be accepted.

An application packet along with basic instructions will be sent after a letter of interest is received at the NEA office starting December 2, 2002. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2003. For more information, call your local UniServ director.

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF

Help students learn the value of service and make a positive difference in the world by participating in Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF. NEA and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF encourage you to join in this 52-year tradition and order those free orange boxes and educational kits by visiting www.unicefusa.org or by calling 800/252-KIDS.

Leaving No Teacher Behind

K-12 teachers can apply to receive a free, fully loaded laptop. The Teacher Laptop Foundation, with the help of many corporate and individual sponsors, fulfills its mission of "helping teachers obtain the technology tools needed to educate students in the 21st century." Selected teachers will also receive free lifetime Internet access and tech support. For more information and to register, visit www.teacherlaptop.org or write to The Teacher Laptop Foundation, 12460 Crabapple, Suite 202-202, Alpharetta, GA 30004.

Cross-Cultural Experience

The Fulbright Memorial Fund (FMF) will send 600 primary and secondary school teachers and administrators on a three-week study visit to Tokyo, Japan, in 2003. Funded by the Japanese government, the intercultural experience includes visits to local schools, seminars with government and education leaders from Japan, as well as a stay with a Japanese family. Teachers will then incorporate lessons on Japanese culture and values into the classroom, educating students and colleagues alike. To apply to either the June, October, or November 2003 study, visit www.iie.org/pgms/fmf, or call the Institute of International Education (IIE) at 888/527-2636. Application deadline is December 10, 2002.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Practical Pamphlets

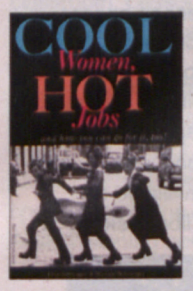
The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation presents Fastback, a series of helpful pamphlets on education topics. Titles include: *Character Education Through Children's Literature; Teachers Mentoring Teachers; Positive Parent-Teacher Conferences; Evaluating Website Content,* and *Inside Teams in Education.* $4 per title. To order, call 800/766-1156 or go to www.pdkintl.org.

A Mexican-American Journey

Learn about one of the most distinguished leaders in the United States' Hispanic community through Julian Nava's autobiography, *Julian Nava: My Mexican-American Journey.* Nava discusses growing up as a child of poor Mexican immigrants and working hard to earn a doctorate from Harvard University before becoming the first Mexican-American to serve on the Los Angeles school board and serve as ambassador to Mexico. 224 pp. $16.95 by Pinata Books. To order, visit www.arte.uh.edu or call 800/633-2783.

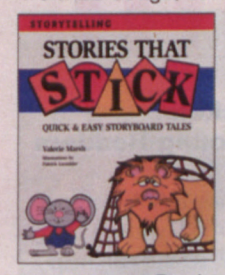
Hot Jobs

Young women thinking about their future can learn about plenty of cool jobs in *Cool Women, Hot Jobs.* Written by Tina Schwager and Michele Schuerger, the book profiles women in different careers, including an FBI Special Agent and the head of the National Zoo. The women provide the secrets of their success, emphasizing that girls can do anything they set their minds to. 280 pp. $15.95 from Free Spirit Publishing. To order, call 800/735-7323.



Stick Out

Give story time a boost with *Stories That Stick: Quick & Easy Storyboard Tales* by Valerie Marsh. Choose from 22 songs, stories, poems, and fables, complete with cut out patterns to aid in the storytelling process and liven up your magnetic or flannel board. 88 pp., $15.95 from UpstartBooks. To order, call 800/448-4887.

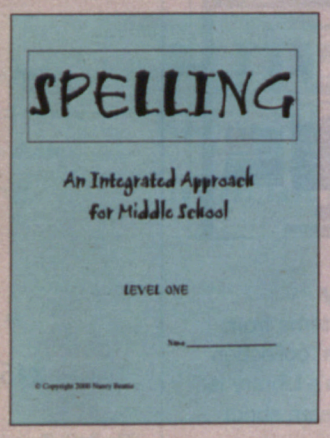


Prepping for the SAT

If you're a high school teacher trying to encourage students to study for the SAT, you may want to tell them about Numbskull—an SAT Prep Game that lets students study for the test. The game has over 300 math and verbal questions and offers critical tips and strategies for taking the SAT. Go to www.lateforthesky.com or call 800/422-3434 to learn more about the game, available for $29.95 plus $5 s&h from Late For the Sky Production Company.

Integrated Spelling

Middle School teacher Nancy Beattie (profiled in *NEA Today* last October) was tired of the low success rate of the spelling program she used in her classroom. So she created her own. After researching and enlisting ideas from other teachers, *Spelling: An Integrated Approach for Middle School* became a reality. Beattie's workbook includes teacher-recommended words used in many subjects, and words that are commonly used, misspelled, or misused. Students practice the basics—antonyms, synonyms, action verbs and compound sentences—through clear lessons. The program comes in three levels to accommodate students' varying needs. To order, call 248/689-5317 or go to www.bteducationalprograms.com. Program books are $2.85 each or less for 100 or more.



DIVERSITY Calendar

October

October—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History Month
October is the nationally designated month to remember campaigns and efforts to eliminate discrimination and stereotyping and to increase respect, understanding, and sensitivity toward individuals in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community. For resources and other information, go to www.glsen.org/templates/issues/?subject=2.

October 23—Chulalongkorn Day
This day commemorates the death of King Chulalongkorn, or King Rama V (1868-1910), one of Thailand's most revered monarchs, who died in 1910. During his reign, King Chulalongkorn began to modernize Thailand, abolishing slavery and overseeing the construction of the first Thai railway and the first public museum in the country. Thais from all walks of life lay decorated wreaths at his statue in Bangkok's Royal Plaza. For more about King Chulalongkorn, visit http://members.tripod.com/~tudtu/rama5.html.

Fourth Monday in October (October 28)—New Zealand Labor Day
New Zealand celebrated its first Labor Day on October, 28, 1890, when several thousand trade union members and supporters attended parades. The holiday celebrates the struggle for an eight-hour work day, a right that New Zealand workers had been among the first in the world to claim in 1840. To learn more about the history of this holiday, visit www.nzhistory.net.nz/Gallery/Labour/Labour.htm.

october

November

November 2—Day of the Dead
People in Mexico and some parts of the United States celebrate the Day of the Dead to remember and honor deceased relatives and friends. In rural areas, people decorate gravesites, leaving flowers and other gifts, and in urban areas people erect altars, next to which they leave food and drink. For more, visit www.azcentral.com/rep/dead/history/.

November 4—Diwali
One of India's most important celebrations, Diwali marks the beginning of a new year with five days of festivities that celebrate truth and light over ignorance and darkness. Flowers adorn houses and streets and lamps are lighted in honor of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity. To learn more, visit www.indianculturеonline.com/festival/main.asp?item=H_001 or www.bawarchi.com/festivals/diwali1.html.

November 6-December 4—Ramadan
In Islam, in the ninth month of the Muslim year, the first revelation of the Qur'an is commemorated. During this holy month, all Muslims must fast during daylight hours and forgo other indulgences. The final day of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, is celebrated by a day of feasting. For more, visit www.factmonster.com/spot/ramadan1.html.

november

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in the Light Lane

A True Seeker

I teach high school English, and when my seniors read Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, I often put Zen koans on the board for the students to ponder. My little Zen book is loaded with classic koans such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

One morning, I found a student doggedly searching the back of the book. "Are you looking for a specific koan?" I asked. "No," replied the student, "I'm looking for the answers."

Conrad Sienkiewicz
Litchfield, Connecticut

We were having lunch in the school cafeteria. One first-grade girl turned to her classmate and remarked, "If you don't eat the food on your plate, you'll turn back into a baby."

Frances Tucker
Chapel Hill, Tennessee

I supervise in-school suspensions in a secondary school, so I have the privilege of restraining behaviorally challenged adolescents from pursuing their activities. I routinely display framed quotes on my desk. A favorite stated: "What's exciting about life is that every morning offers a brand new day with unlimited possibilities. Yesterday's mistakes and regrets belong to yesterday. Today is a clean slate, a chance to start over, to do or become anything you want, a chance to go for it!"

One evening I found a small slip of paper protruding from the edge of the framed quotation, on which a student had written neatly, "If yesterday's mistakes belong to yesterday, what am I doing here today?"

Marilyn Gross
Downingtown, Pennsylvania

One day while my students were returning from physical education and transitioning into our language arts activity, a girl who doesn't particularly care for speaking in front of the class approached me with an unusual announcement.

"Mr. Barde," she said in a hoarse voice, "I don't think I can talk very loud today. I have Languagitis."

Rick Barde
Portland, Oregon

One of my geometry students returned to school after being absent on the day of a major chapter test. I set him up in the hallway with a desk and a copy of the test. Forty minutes later he marched into the room, angrily smacked the test down on my desk, and said, "I had no idea how to do numbers 17 and 18." I told him I was very sorry to hear that. As he turned and walked away, he added, "and nobody else out in the hall knew how to do them either."

Amy Davey
Westlake, Ohio

As I finished taking attendance in my second-grade class, three kindergarten children appeared in my room. Alyssa, supported by two classmates, came to tell me that her brother Kyle was absent from my class. I thanked her and asked what had kept him home from school. Her quick response: He was sick with Shrek throat.

Rose Loffredo
Wayne, New Jersey

We had been having trouble getting students to walk in the hallways quietly, so I came up with the idea that we all put ourselves on "mute" (as you do with a TV remote control) as we walk down the long hallways to lunch and other places. Coincidentally, my students had recently been studying Helen Keller. I felt confident that the students understood Ms. Keller's disabilities until I read one student's journal entry. The student wrote: "Helen Keller was born normal, but she caught a disease and became blind and deaf. She was also on mute for the rest of her life."

Lorraine Kearns
Crestline, California

"I thought out of 100 questions, at least one answer would be Winston Churchill."

As my gifted and talented fifth graders were working on a math assignment, one boy asked, "What is that potion for finding the area of a circle?" I guess in the age of Harry Potter, "potion" and "formula" are interchangeable—even in math class!

Kate Wolf
Lutherville, Maryland

In my high school interior design class, I used the word "monotonous" in a test question. A student asked what the word meant. I started to reply that it meant "lacking in variety" when she interrupted with "Oh yeah, it means being married to one person."

Nancy Cibor
Beverly Hills, Michigan

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane,"
NEA Today
1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Fax: 202/822-7206
Send e-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your e-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an e-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

Verbal Feats

My German 1 students were beginning to feel the pressure of the end of the term. When I introduced stem-changing verbs, most of the students moaned. I knew that some of them were feeling more pressure than others when one of my best students cried out from the back of the room, "But, Herr Byrd, why haven't verbs ever done this before?"

David R. Byrd
Grand Junction, Colorado

After evaluating a cooking experience in my seventh-grade family and consumers sciences class, I assigned homework requiring students to demonstrate their math skills. On a sheet of paper, students were to double the recipe that we had used. They were reminded to include all the ingredients and to make sure that the measurements were written in a form that people could understand.

I had to laugh when I came to the work of one student. She wrote down the entire recipe twice.

Dixie Elmes
Westminster, Maryland

I attended Grandparents Day at my grandson's kindergarten class. We were doing an art project together.

Looking up at me, he said, "Grandpa, I'm just like you, except I'm smaller and a little smarter."

Bob Burke
Milton, Wisconsin

In my U.S. History class, one of my 11th graders wrote the following answer to a test question that asked for students to name the four levels of the atmosphere: "The troposphere, the stratosphere, the ionosphere, and Britney Spheres."

Gerald Lunderville
Long Beach, California

One morning, I was summoned to the office by the loudspeaker, which hangs next to the schoolhouse clock in my classroom. "Miss Mosellie," one student said, "the clock wants you."

Weda Mosellie
Phillipsburg, New Jersey

Marketplace

Announcements

16th Annual Technology + Learning Conference, November 13-15, 2002 Dallas, Texas

NEA members can save on registgration-$145 off the regular rate-with NEA discount! (you must use the form from the Web site). Participate in professional development workshops conducted by NEA members who will show you ways to enhance teaching and learning with technology. See the latest exhibits and network with colleagues from around the country. Sponsored by the National School Boards Association and cosponsored by the National Education Association.
www.nea.org/technology/nsba

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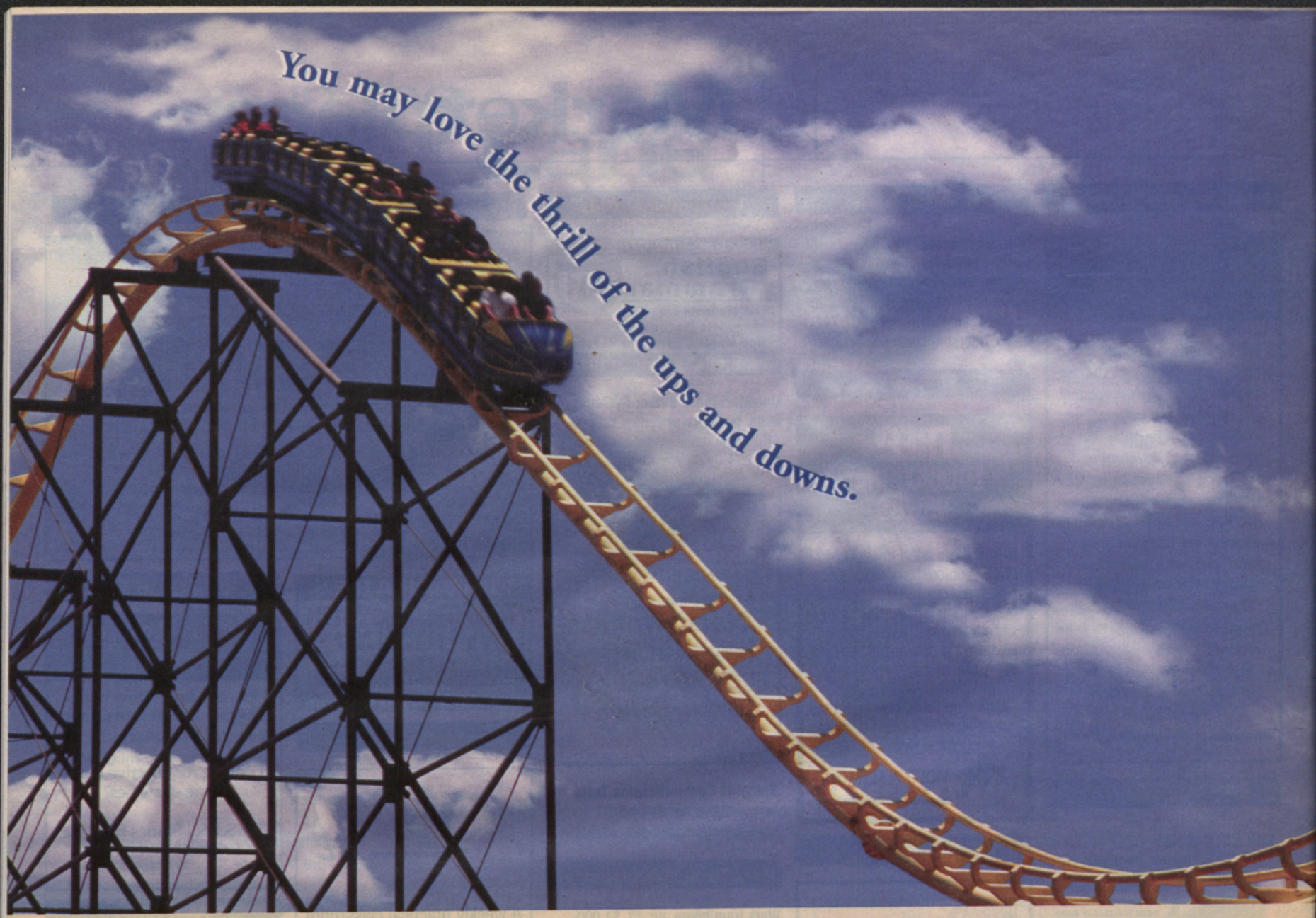

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